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DEFENDING FORWARD: SOVIET ACTIVITIES
IN FRONT OF THE
MAIN LINE OF DEFENSE

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) The Soviet army has a comprehensive methodology for security and defense. The security battle is designed to strip away enemy reconnaissance, prevent surprise attack, force enemy forces to deploy prematurely, and create the optimum conditions for targetting. The security battle is fought within a security zone or covering zone or by forward positions and combat outposts. Maneuver is a key component of the security battle.				
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**DEFENDING FORWARD: SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN FRONT
OF THE MAIN LINE OF DEFENSE**

LTC Lester W. Grau
Soviet Army Studies Office
U.S. Army Combined Arms Center
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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The views expressed here are those of the Soviet Army Studies Office. They should not necessarily be construed as validated threat doctrine.

DEFENDING FORWARD: SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN FRONT OF THE MAIN LINE OF DEFENSE

Soviet defensive doctrine places new emphasis on the importance of defensive techniques. This has prompted the Soviets to reassess how they will conduct defensive operations and actions. At the operational level, Soviet use of defensive regions, covering armies, defensive belts, counter-offensive maneuver forces and the deep strike has drawn renewed interest. At the tactical level, the professional military press is reflecting a lively debate on defensive techniques and force structures, while field units and military schools are devoting considerably more time to defensive problems.¹

Soviet concepts envision defense both in direct contact with the enemy and when out of direct enemy contact. Of particular interest today is the establishment of coordinated defenses when not in direct contact with enemy forces—a circumstance often encountered prior to the initiation of hostilities, when preparing to meet counter-offensives and counter-attacks, when regrouping or refitting in the course of an offensive, when preparing to absorb the force of an enemy offensive prior to conducting a counter-offensive/counter-attack or when performing an economy-of-force mission in support of an offensive.

This paper examines Soviet security and defensive measures taken to combat enemy ground reconnaissance and attacking forces when there is no direct contact with the enemy. It treats the Soviet security zone in the context of a prepared defense and the Soviet covering zone in the context of a hasty or partially prepared defense. Finally, it analyzes local tactical security measures routinely employed by Soviet forces on the defense.

DEFENSIVE DOCTRINE

The offensive nature of Soviet military art was established following bitter debates over the adoption of an offensive or a defensive strategy and was institutionalized in the 1929 *Field Service Regulations*. Since that time, with few exceptions, offensive strategy has dominated Soviet military thought because the Soviets believed that only an offensive strategy was decisive.² Defense, on the other hand, surrendered the initiative to the enemy and was only to be used to gain time, hold vital ground, weaken the enemy, ensure survival and provide for economy of force. This offensive stance persisted until the May 1987 proclamation of the Warsaw Pact defensive doctrine.

The actual nature of Warsaw Pact defensive doctrine has not yet been fully discerned by western analysts. Some view emerging strategic concepts under this doctrine as prescribing a significant covering force of covering armies or groups of forces, behind which a potent, mobilized offensive/counter-offensive force can mass. Others see the doctrine producing a much-reduced force which has little rapid mobilization capability and has only the capability to defeat an initial attack and restore the border. The Soviets have postulated several historic models as the basis of the new defensive doctrine, but all have political or operational considerations which limit their value as examples of "pure defensiveness".³ Unlike the debates preceding the adoption of the 1929 *Field Service Regulations*, there was no significant strategic debate recorded in the professional military journals of the Soviet Armed Forces preceding the adoption of the Warsaw Pact defensive doctrine.⁴ Most indications are that the adoption of the defensive doctrine was a political decision imposed on the military to implement.⁵ Whatever the case, strategic, operational, and tactical techniques associated with "defensive doctrine" will be evolutionary developments derived from both historic and current Soviet military defensive theory.

A vital part of any planned defense is the covering force or local security which is deployed in front of the main defenses. In this role, the Soviets utilize security zones, covering zones and combat security forces. How these defensive techniques are employed may cast light on the nature and credibility of defensive doctrine.

OPERATIONAL DEFENSE SECURITY ZONE

The formation of a security zone (*polosa obespecheniya*) is an operational decision.⁶ An army or *front* may create a security zone when transitioning to the defense. The security zone is normally established when defenses are being created which are not in direct contact with the enemy. If forces are in contact, an area forward of the planned main defensive line may be seized in order to better construct defenses and to establish a

security zone. If an army or *front* defends in depth in a series of belts, a security zone may also be established between defensive belts.⁷

The purpose of a security zone is to mislead the attacker regarding the location, configuration, and actual composition of the defense and to gain time needed to prepare it. The security zone enables the defender to determine accurately the composition of the enemy forces and resources, enemy intentions and directions of advance. The security zone provides adequate reaction time to the defender and enables the defender to compel enemy main forces to deploy prematurely. A security zone may also be used to force an enemy to attack in a disadvantageous direction, and to inflict casualties on the enemy force before it arrives at the forward edge of the battle area.⁸

The depth of a security zone depends on the goal and conduct of the operation, the nature of the terrain and the time required to establish the defense. It usually extends 15 to 20 kilometers in front of the main defensive belt and includes several battle positions, strongpoints and obstacle networks.⁹ Depending on its proximity to Soviet borders, it may be defended by forward detachments, border guards regiments or regiments from fortified regions (*ukreplennyy rayon*).¹⁰ These forces will fight from a series of positions prepared in depth and tied in with minefields, ambushes and demolitions.¹¹

Security zone defensive positions are established on important axes of advance into the main defensive area to increase the tactical depth of the defense. The depth of the security zone prevents the enemy from rapidly reaching the forward edge of the main defensive zone, provides for coordination and artillery support of the forward combined arms combat force with its main force, and establishes adequate maneuver room for the forward combat force. Defensive positions and obstacles are situated so that they cannot be bypassed and are strong enough to make it difficult for the enemy to overcome without significant expenditures of forces, resources and time. Tank-heavy combat forces and the preponderance of obstacles are positioned on potential armor axes of advance. Reinforced motorized rifle battalions usually defend secondary axes.¹² The Soviets expect that an opposing force commander will conduct his main attack on the best avenue of approach to facilitate achievement of his mission, and believe that slower, constricted avenues of approach will be used primarily for secondary efforts.¹³

Forces and resources which may be found in a Soviet security zone include reconnaissance elements, combined arms forces, long range attack systems, command and control elements, ambush forces, engineers, forward position forces and helicopter gunships. This paper examines each of these elements within the context of the security zone.

RECONNAISSANCE

Front, army, divisional and regimental reconnaissance assets function either physically within the *front's* security zone or in support of it. Operational elements such as the *front* SPETSNAZ brigade and the army SPETSNAZ company, and operational and tactical reconnaissance aircraft, are not usually located in the security zone; rather, they provide information that will influence or affect the security zone battle. The *front* radio and radar intercept regiment, the army radio intercept battalion and the army tactical drone squadron probably have elements operating from within the security zone.

Division ground reconnaissance elements are located in and forward of the security zone. The division reconnaissance battalion operates up to 50 kilometers from the forward edge of the main battle area, and, consequently, its long range company and three ground reconnaissance companies are often likely to be forward of the security zone.¹⁴ The battalion's radio/radar reconnaissance company usually also operates within the security zone. The target acquisition battery of the division's artillery regiment and possibly the division's artillery command battery deploy reconnaissance elements in the security zone for artillery reconnaissance. The surface-to-air missile regiment of the division has elements of its target acquisition battery in the security zone. The engineer reconnaissance platoon of the division's engineer battalion and the chemical reconnaissance platoon of the division's chemical defense battalion may also work in the security zone.

Regimental reconnaissance elements also operate in the security zone. The regimental reconnaissance company operates 15 to 25 kilometers in front of its regiment, so the entire company probably deploys in the security zone.¹⁵ The headquarters platoon of the regimental 122-mm howitzer battalion probably has its rangefinders and target acquisition radar forward. Additionally, radar of the regimental anti-aircraft missile and artillery battery and the regimental chemical reconnaissance platoon may perform reconnaissance in the

security zone. Combined armed forces defending in the security zone also deploy reconnaissance elements. Should the security zone be penetrated, some special and technical reconnaissance elements are withdrawn, but the bulk of reconnaissance forces go to ground or move to the flanks of the penetration and continue to report.¹⁶

COMBINED ARMS FORCES

Forward detachments, KGB border guards regiments, and regiments of Soviet fortified regions are organized as combined arms forces and are ideally suited to fight the security zone battle. Although this paper addresses the forward detachment in the security zone battle, the same considerations apply for KGB border guards and fortified region units.

Forward detachments are reinforced motorized rifle or tank battalions or regiments designated to accomplish independent local missions at the tactical or operational level.¹⁷ The usual attachments to a motorized rifle battalion serving as a forward detachment are an artillery battalion, a tank company, an air defense battery, an engineer platoon and a chemical/radiological reconnaissance squad. The usual attachments to a tank battalion serving as a forward detachment are an artillery battalion, a motorized rifle company, an air defense platoon, an engineer platoon and a chemical/radiological reconnaissance squad. Additional artillery, engineers and water crossing assets are attached as necessary.¹⁸ Normally battalion-size forward detachments are deployed by divisions in the security zone, whereas regimental-size forward detachments are deployed by armies in the security zone.

The missions of forward detachments in the security zone are to hold consecutively prepared positions; to wear out the enemy; to conceal the actual location of the forward edge of the main defensive line; to bring enemy main forces under effective nuclear, high precision, or concentrated artillery fire strikes; and to gain time for the organization of the defense by the main force.¹⁹ Forward detachments force part of the attacking enemy to deploy and thus slow its attack—creating a sufficient grouping of targets against which nuclear or conventional weapons can be successfully employed. Forward detachments engage enemy reconnaissance and advance combat units with direct and indirect fire, ambushes and limited counterattacks. They avoid becoming decisively engaged with the enemy main force by withdrawing to the next prepared defensive position to repeat the process. A key element of the forward detachment's mission is to help determine the enemy intention, main axes and force composition—particularly the location of major armored groupings and nuclear capable weapons.²⁰

Defending second echelon regiments of first echelon divisions usually constitute battalion-size forward detachments.²¹ Depending on the mission, the strength of enemy forces, the indications of enemy impending activity, the relative importance of axes of advance through the security zone, terrain, availability of engineers, and time, a division may constitute several forward detachments in its portion of the security zone. These forward detachments, although reinforced by up to two companies of engineers per battalion-size forward detachment, accomplish much of the field fortification labor by themselves. It is imperative that all of the necessary labor-intensive work in the security zone be accomplished before direct contact is made with the enemy force.²²

The forward detachment defends on a much broader front in the security zone than would a motorized rifle battalion in the main defensive belt. A forward detachment defends in a single echelon with a reinforced platoon in reserve on a frontage of 7 to 10 kilometers, whereas the normal frontage for a defending motorized rifle battalion is 3 to 5 kilometers.²³ Companies and platoons occupy their normal strongpoint frontages (a company occupies from 500 to 1000 meters in width and 500 meters in depth), but gaps between company strongpoints will frequently exceed several kilometers. Obstacles, patrols, and ambushes cover these gaps.

The reserve is positioned on the most dangerous approach, two to three kilometers behind the forward edge of the forward detachment's defensive area. It provides depth to the defense and prevents the enemy from reaching the forward detachment's flanks and rear. The reserve also plays a pivotal role in covering the withdrawal of the battalion's main force.²⁴

Positions in the security zone: The number of consecutive prepared positions in the security zone depends on the nature of the terrain, the existence of naturally defensible lines and the depth of the zone. The first position (closest to the enemy) is chosen along a favorable naturally defensible line at a depth from which the main force artillery can support the battle from temporary firing positions. The next (second) position may also run



along a naturally defensible line at a distance from the forward edge which will require the enemy to displace his artillery and mortars in order to shift fires from the first to the second position. This second position is sited to insure that companies and platoons can maintain coordinated, interlocking fires in the event of withdrawal. Further positions (third, fourth, and more) are constructed depending on time, resources and the depth of the security zone. All positions are selected at a distance from each other which will permit continuous fires on the enemy, inflicting casualties on him throughout the depth of the security zone.²⁵

The final position (closest to the main defensive line) is called the forward position (*peredovaya pozitsiya*). Here, the forward detachment holds a portion of a line normally located three to five kilometers in front of the main defensive line.²⁶ This position simulates the main defensive line and is well-prepared and supplied with engineer obstacles. Companies or battalions from the depth of the defense occupy the most critical sectors of the forward position, while forward detachments occupy sectors in the forward position astride secondary approaches.²⁷

Primary, alternate and reserve firing positions for the forward detachment's artillery, mortars and air defense weapons are also located throughout the depth of the security zone. Commanders reconnoiter, prepare and maintain maneuver routes and withdrawal routes. They prepare deployment firing lines for tanks and BMPs or BTRs as well as their antitank reserves to cover armor avenues of approach. They select deployment lines for counterattacks on probable enemy breakthrough axes. The Soviets emplace artillery positions in depth on armor avenues of approach where the direct fire capability of Soviet artillery can be utilized when needed. The Soviets enforce camouflage discipline throughout the zone.²⁸

Obstacles are emplaced to exhaust the enemy continuously along his likely axes of advance, with the greatest density on the armor avenues of approach. Obstacles are emplaced in front of each security zone position and in the gap between strongpoints. Passages are left in obstacles for Soviet companies and platoons to withdraw to the next position. Bridges and other fixtures which aid the enemy advance are prepared for demolition. The system of obstacles in the security zone is designed so that an attacker attempting to bypass one obstacle will encounter another and, in attempting to move around the obstacles, exposes his flanks to the fires of the forward detachment's artillery, tanks and antitank guided missiles.³⁰

Figure 1 illustrates a security zone with a series of four prepared positions and a main defensive line. The northern-most company (the 3rd motorized rifle company) fights its way back from the first and second position as does its southern neighbors. Unlike the 1st and 2d motorized rifle companies, the 3rd motorized rifle company does not defend on the forward position. Rather, it moves from the third position directly into the main defense. A fresh company (coincidentally the 3rd) from a first echelon battalion in the main defense defends the northern forward position on the main axis of enemy advance. The 1st and 2d motorized rifle companies of the forward detachment occupy forward positions astride secondary axes of advance. The Soviets forecast that the forward detachment will be too weakened, too rushed and in need of refitting at this point in the battle to adequately handle the enemy main attack. A recent study of a forward detachment's defense of the security zone is provided in Annex A.

Organization of the defense of the security zone by the forward detachment. The division or army commander normally provides the following information to the forward detachment commander (battalion-size at division and regiment-size at army):

- enemy situation;
- forward detachment mission;
- composition of the forward detachment to include reinforcements;
- boundaries of the security zone and the time by which the forward detachment must be prepared to defend;
- general location of the successive fighting positions;
- obstacle and engineer support plan;
- missions of adjacent forward detachments and forward reconnaissance forces;
- fire coordination procedures with the supporting artillery, helicopters and fixed wing aviation ;
- fire coordination procedures with the main force defending first echelon units;
- duration of the defense at each position and the process for withdrawal;
- procedure for signal and communications support;
- system of comprehensive combat support and combat service support; and
- main topics of political work with the troops.³¹

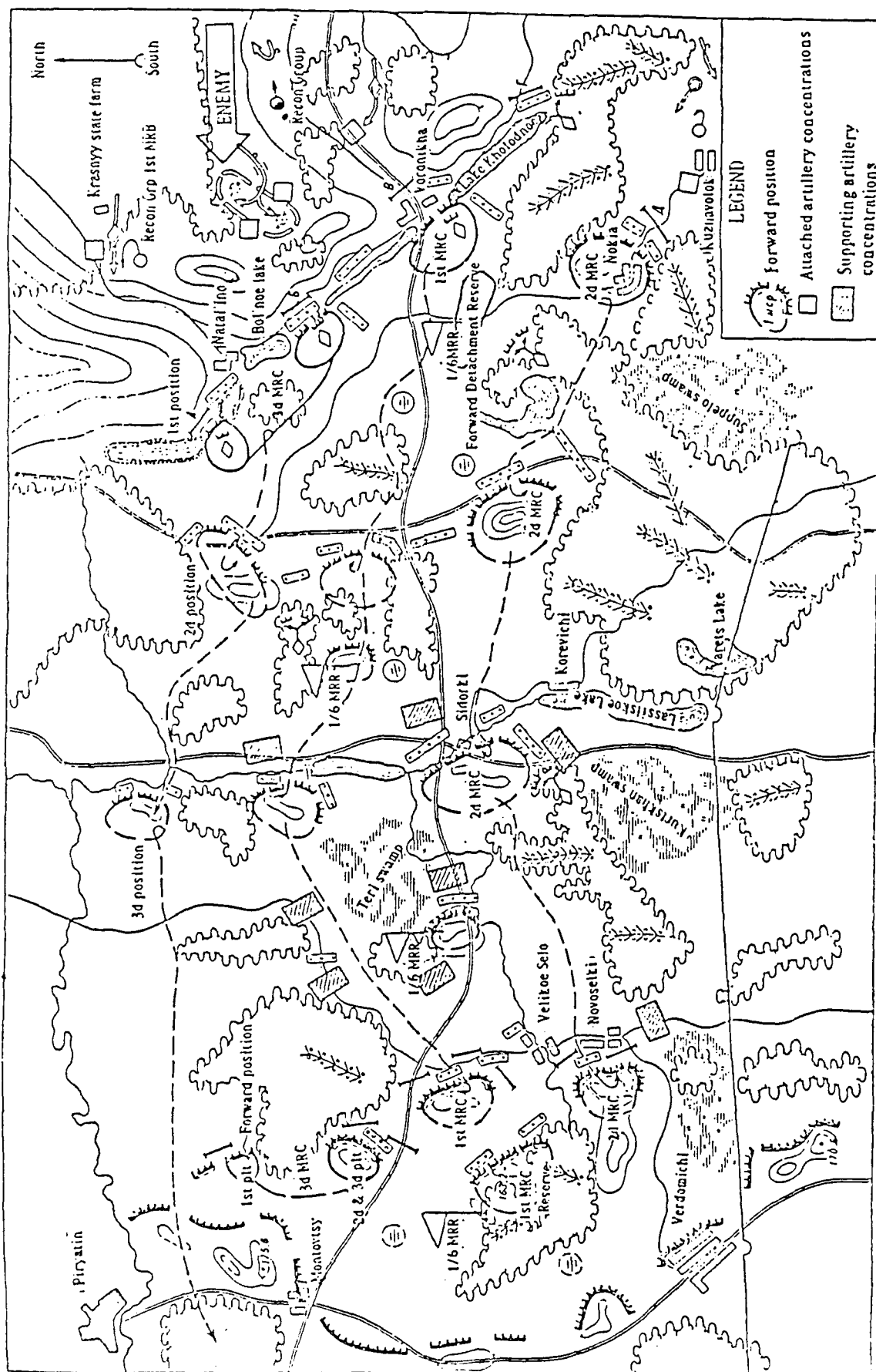


Figure 1.

The forward detachment commander then begins his troop leading procedures as he clarifies his mission; determines the immediate measures to most rapidly prepare his subunits to accomplish it; calculates the time available; directs the chief of staff on preparation of subunits for the upcoming mission, the organization of reconnaissance, and the timing and order of preparing the positions. He then assesses the situation, arrives at a decision and briefs his division or army commander on the decision.³² After his superior approves the decision, the forward detachment commander briefs it to his subordinate commanders; issues orders for comprehensive combat support and combat service support, troop control and political work; and takes his subordinate commanders on the commander's reconnaissance (*rekognostirovka*). During the reconnaissance, the commander issues an oral combat order and organizes coordination. Following this, the commander monitors the preparation of the subunits and submits status reports to his superior at the prescribed times.³³

Making a well-founded decision for defending the security zone is dependent on careful terrain analysis and correct determination of the axes on which the enemy can rapidly advance through the zone. The entire security zone is studied as well as each position. The commander's reconnaissance covers considerable area and takes time. If time permits, this reconnaissance will cover all positions. If, however, time is limited, the commander's reconnaissance focuses on the sectors of the defensive positions which cover the most important axis. The terrain study on which the decision and commander's reconnaissance is based is done by a group of officers from the division or army staff, the division or army commander or deputy commander, and the commanders of the subunits who will defend the security zone.³⁴

Based on this study and his personal reconnaissance, the forward detachment commander determines:

- axes on which to concentrate combat power;
- exact disposition of defensive positions and forces on the ground;
- withdrawal routes and procedures from each position;
- engineer work, obstacles, demolitions and field fortifications;
- axes for friendly maneuver;
- ambush locations;
- fire support and the location of attached and supporting artillery within the security zone; and
- missions of the combat reconnaissance patrol in coordination with other reconnaissance.³⁵

Artillery attached to the forward detachment. One or two artillery battalions are normally attached to a motorized rifle battalion or tank battalion serving as a forward detachment.³⁶ This artillery destroys the enemy on the approaches to the defense, destroys or neutralizes enemy nuclear delivery systems, repulses enemy attacks, destroys tanks and infantry which have broken through the defense by direct fire and covers the withdrawal of the forward detachment.³⁷

Artillery positions are selected to intersect major axes of advance and are prepared so that the guns can deliver effective indirect and direct fires. Direct fire antitank killing zones are tied in with tank ambushes and engineer obstacles. Often, preplanned "fire sacks" are included within the depth of the security zone defense position. The "fire sack" is defined by internal obstacles which canalize the attacker toward a significant obstacle overwatched by artillery in the direct fire role. One flank is held by obstacles and the antitank reserve while the other flank's obstacle belt permits the timely introduction of a counterattack force (usually the forward detachment's reserve). The neck of the sack is sealed by attached or supporting artillery located in the depth of the security zone.

Primary and alternate firing positions are constructed and fire plans are prepared for probable enemy axes of advance, probable locations of firing points for enemy nuclear delivery systems and artillery and routes of movement. The commander plans fires to cover gaps between platoon and company strongpoints, the area forward of engineer obstacles and critical points within the depth of the defense.³⁸ Figure 2 is an example of a fire plan for a security zone employing three positions in depth.

Attached artillery is usually divided into two groups. The first group is located on the most tank vulnerable axis. The second group is located behind the position to which the detachment will withdraw. Thus, both groups support combat by the forward detachment at the position which lays ahead while withdrawal from this position is supported by the artillery group located in the depth.³⁹

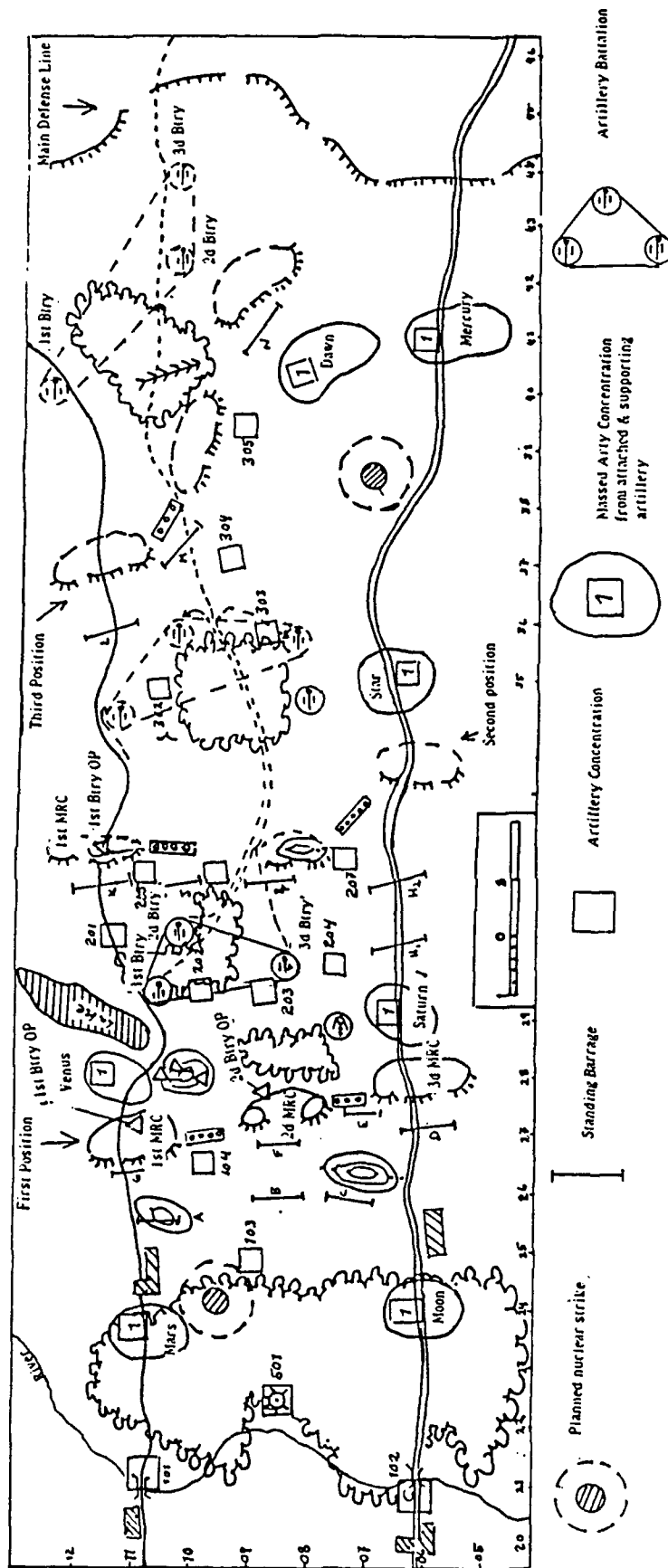


Figure 2

LONG RANGE ATTACK SYSTEMS

Besides artillery attached to the forward detachments, additional artillery supports the forward detachments. This artillery is frequently located in the security zone, normally in the vicinity of the forward position.⁴¹ Long range attack systems utilize long range reconnaissance reports to attack the enemy on the distant approaches. These attacks weaken the enemy, disrupt his attack and slow his tempo—making him vulnerable to long range nuclear or conventional strikes.

In the mid-70s, FROG missile battalions of first echelon divisions were deployed into the security zone in order to give additional striking range to this 70-kilometer nuclear delivery system.⁴² Whether today's tactical range missiles, with their increased range and accuracy, would be deployed into the security zone is uncertain. As a minimum, long range guns and multiple rocket launcher systems (such as the 2S5 and BM-22) could be deployed in the security zone, along with division artillery, in the vicinity of the forward position to provide long range fires. Fixed wing aircraft and helicopters provide additional long range fires.

Supporting aviation and artillery also play a vital role in covering the withdrawal of the forward detachments from one position to another. Fighter aviation provides continuous top cover during withdrawal, while supporting artillery provides uninterrupted covering fire.⁴³

COMMAND AND CONTROL

As stated earlier, army or *front* commanders make the operational decision to employ a security zone. The division commander, however, has responsibility for the conduct of the security zone battle.⁴⁴ The division commander and his chief of staff must at the same time focus their attention on preparing the main defensive area for the impending battle. Indications are that the division commander establishes an auxiliary command post in the security zone which is commanded by his deputy. The deputy commander is responsible for controlling the reconnaissance elements, combined arms forces, long range attack systems, engineers, ambush forces, and forward position forces operating within the division sector of the security zone.⁴⁵ He maintains radio and wire contact with adjacent division's security zones, the division commander and subordinate elements. The deputy commander, like the forward detachment commander, may split his command post into a forward and rear element, so that he can displace the command post and still maintain uninterrupted control.

AMBUSH FORCES

The forward detachment commander may constitute ambush forces from his own command or employ additional ambush forces provided by the division commander. In the security zone battle, ambushes are used to destroy forces approaching the forward detachment's defensive position, to eliminate enemy reconnaissance elements, to cover gaps or junctions in the defense, to destroy forces which have broken through the defense and to destroy air assault landings.⁴⁶ Ambushes are also used to cover flanks and prevent positions from being bypassed.⁴⁷ Finally, ambushes may be located along the withdrawal routes in order to destroy or discourage those enemy forces in pursuit.

Soviet open sources tend to focus on company- and platoon-size ambushes. The ambushing forces are constituted from reinforced motorized rifle or tank troops, and fight from a series of hastily prepared positions or from a well-prepared position. Annex B provides detailed information on ambush training and techniques.

ENGINEERS

Considerable engineer support is required to prepare the security zone. Although the forward detachments do much of the necessary manual work in constructing obstacles, field fortifications and entrenchments, up to two engineer companies are assigned to each forward detachment. Additional engineer forces may be placed in support of the security zone. If sufficient time is available, engineer efforts usually begin on the first position. After the majority of work is completed on the first position, the engineer efforts are shifted to the second position and then the third position and so on until the work is complete. If time is limited, engineer efforts are shifted to work on the critical sectors of each defensive position simultaneously. This method, of course, is less efficient, results in a lessened density of obstacles, and limits the construction of fortifications and obstacles to the major avenues of attack.⁴⁸

Tank, BMP, BTR, artillery and air defense crews are responsible for preparing their primary and alternate fighting positions, but the number and depth of the fighting positions in the security zone requires much more engineer support than normal.

FORWARD POSITIONS

The final position within the security zone is called the forward position. It is normally located three to five kilometers in front of the forward edge of the battle area and is designed to simulate the forward main defenses. It is a well-prepared defensive position with a comprehensive obstacle system. Particular attention is paid to integrated fire planning and camouflage. The forward position strips away enemy reconnaissance, forces the enemy to prematurely deploy his combat formations and causes the enemy to carry out his preparatory fires and aviation strikes on the forward position where less combat power is situated. Since the forward position replicates the main defensive position, artillery is positioned forward to simulate the main defensive force artillery. Obstacles, field fortifications and camouflage patterns replicate those of the main defenses, and the forward position defenders conduct as stubborn a defense as would be expected at the forward edge of the battle area.⁴⁹

Fresh, reinforced companies or battalions from the main defense are situated on those sectors of the forward position which are astride the main avenues of approach.⁵⁰ Forward detachments defend sectors of the forward position which are situated astride secondary avenues of approach. This is due to the projected weakened condition of the forward detachment, which will have fought and withdrawn from several positions by this point of the battle. It is also due to the forward detachment's projected lack of adequate time to occupy positions on the main axes of advance when withdrawing under pressure. The battle of a company in a forward position is described in Annex C and G.

Forward positions may be established in the absence of a security zone. In this case, forward positions are located only on key axes of advance and are prepared, occupied and controlled by first echelon regiments.

THE SECURITY ZONE BATTLE

The security zone battle begins with reports from deep reconnaissance elements which detect the movement of significant enemy forces; the location of enemy nuclear-capable or high precision, conventional weapons systems; or the forward movement of war stocks. The operational commander engages these targets outside the security zone with missiles, aircraft, long-range artillery and other deep strike assets. As the enemy force approaches the security zone, echeloned reconnaissance elements monitor their progress. Once the enemy force is within range of the long-range weapons systems temporarily stationed in the security zone (FROG, BM-22, 2S5 and the like), these long-range systems engage the advancing enemy. The long-range battle is designed to weaken the enemy, disrupt his formations and slow the tempo of his offensive. Should the long-range battle inflict sufficient damage, it might slow and disorganize the enemy advance sufficiently to allow optimum targeting, strikes and destruction by nuclear weapons or high precision or other conventional strike systems.

The next phase of the battle is the counterreconnaissance battle. The forward detachment commanders position selected subunits and gun crews in alternate positions away from their primary fighting positions to fight and eliminate enemy reconnaissance and march security elements. Only selected subunits and crews engage the enemy. Maximum efforts are made at this point to take enemy prisoners. Once the enemy march security elements have been repulsed, the selected subunits and crews move to their primary positions and await the attack of the enemy advance guard.⁵¹

The enemy advance guard is then expected to attack following a brief artillery preparation. The advance guard may consist of up to three reinforced battalions supported by helicopter gunships. The forward detachment is expected to defeat this attack with direct fire and attached and supporting artillery coordinated by an integrated fire plan.⁵² The forward detachment commander then shifts those weapons whose primary firing positions have been disclosed to their alternate positions (still within the first position).

The Soviets estimate that it takes the enemy approximately an hour to deploy his main body to attack the first position. During this time, supporting artillery fires, helicopter gunships and fixed-wing aviation provide continuous support and augmentation to the fires of the forward detachment. The mission of the forward detachment, at this point, is to prevent a breakthrough of the first position and to hold it for the time needed to

strike the enemy with nuclear or massed artillery strikes. Reconnaissance efforts are critical, as bypassed ground reconnaissance elements and aerial reconnaissance identify massed targets for servicing by nuclear or massed artillery strikes. All efforts are made to disrupt and significantly weaken the enemy attack.

Depending on the situation and the effectiveness of his artillery and air support, the division may keep the forward detachment at the first position to fight the enemy main force, or may withdraw them. The decision to withdraw can only be made at division level, since the division might be controlling several forward detachments and must also consider withdrawal of its long-range systems and the situation to its flanks in the decision.⁵³

The forward detachment may be ordered to withdraw prior to the start of the attack of the main body or while the attack is being repulsed. Naturally, the first situation is preferred for ease of control. Darkness, smoke or other obscurants normally cover withdrawals. Withdrawal is done incrementally and armored subunits are normally the last to withdraw.⁵⁴

The forward detachment occupies the second position and fights this position similarly to the battle for the first position. The security zone battle is fought back through the other echeloned positions until the forward detachment is finally located on a secondary axis in the last (forward) position. The battle of the forward position is then fought. Should the enemy overcome the forward position, the battle for the main defensive belt begins.

COVERING ZONE

Often, there are inadequate forces, resources and time available to establish a security zone.⁵⁵ In order to provide early warning and some forward combat power, the operational or division commander may establish a covering zone (*polosa prikritiya*). Reconnaissance forces, combat outposts (*boyevoye okhraneniye*) and covering detachments (*storozhevoy otryad*) function within this covering zone. The covering zone is usually associated with establishing a hasty or partially prepared defense, transitioning to the offensive, covering the withdrawal or disengagement of a large force or similar, temporary circumstances when the force is not in direct contact with the enemy.⁵⁶ The covering zone battle is not as well defined as the security zone battle due to the often temporary nature of the covering zone and its varied scenarios.

Covering detachments: Covering detachments are normally reinforced platoons or companies which are deployed when battalions or regiments are in the process of moving into an assembly area or establishing initial defensive positions while not in contact with the enemy.⁵⁷ In those cases where a major enemy avenue of approach could threaten orderly deployment, a reinforced battalion may be deployed in the covering zone. Annex D discusses the role of a battalion as a covering detachment.

Combat outposts: Combat outposts may be part of the covering zone. Unless approaches to the battalion defense are covered by a security zone, a covering zone or a forward position and provided that there is no direct contact with the enemy, first-echelon battalions routinely establish a combat outpost to provide combat security. The combat outpost usually consists of a reinforced platoon located two or three kilometers forward of the battalion main defensive position. Its purpose is to prevent a surprise attack and to prevent the enemy from conducting ground reconnaissance. The regiment and division commander may establish additional combat outposts as required. Combat outposts are not established behind forward positions, but may be established in concert with forward positions. An example of this is shown as figure 3. The conduct of a defense employing a combat outpost is discussed in Annex E. Annex F shows how a combat outpost may provide security, introduce maneuver to the defense and bait a trap to draw an attacker into a fire sack.

COMBAT SECURITY

Local tactical security is provided by forward positions and combat outposts and may be supplemented by patrols, camouflage, concealment, deception planning, listening posts, reconnaissance, and guard posts. First echelon battalion commanders routinely deploy at least a combat outpost and reconnaissance when assuming the defense out of direct enemy contact. Commanders also take preventive measures to foil enemy targeting by air, artillery, chemical or nuclear strike.⁵⁹

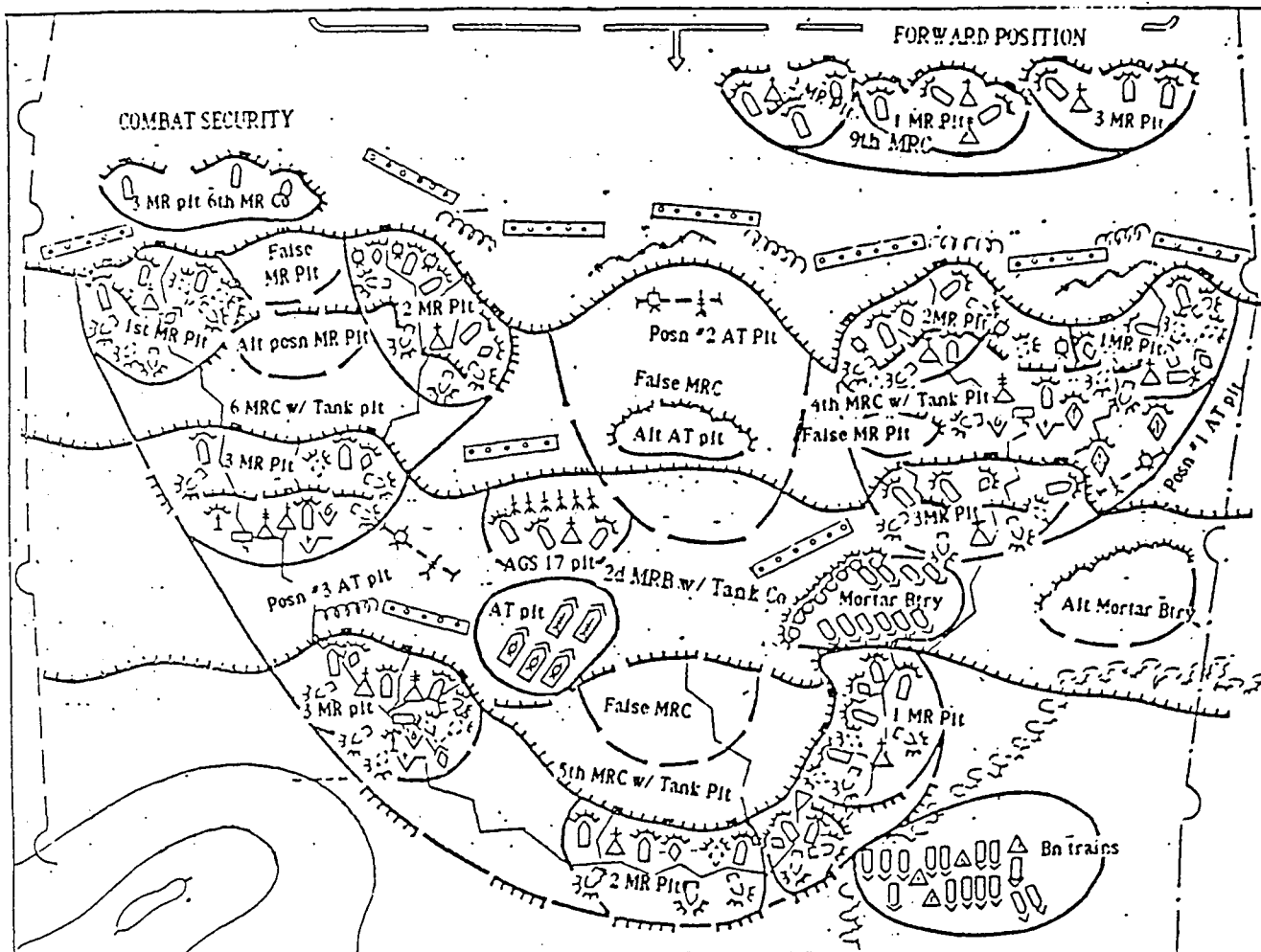


Figure 3

CONCLUSION

The Soviet army has a comprehensive doctrine for security and defense by forces which are not in direct contact with enemy forces. The success of the security battle, in particular, and the defense, in general, depends on the amount of forces, resources and time which the commander is able to devote to the area. The security zone and covering zone are physical areas which differ greatly and the security zone battle and the covering zone battle are fought differently. Combat outposts are routinely established at battalion level and above in order to provide security, prevent surprise attack and strip away enemy reconnaissance. Understanding the circumstances under which the Soviet commander will establish a security zone, covering zone or tactical combat security will enable commanders and staffs to forecast the disposition and actions which would confront an attacker.

ENDNOTES

1. James F. Gebhardt, "Restructuring the Tactical Defense", (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1990).
2. John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pages 211, 296, 308—309.
3. A. Kokoshin and V. Larionov, "Kurskaya bitva v svete sovremennoy oboronitel'noy doctriny" [The Kursk battle in light of contemporary defensive doctrine], *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya* [World economics and international relations], August

1987. A. Kokoshin and V. Larionov, "Protivostoyaniya sil obshchego naznacheniya v kontekste obespecheniya strategicheskoy stabil'nosti" [The counterposition of general purpose forces in the context of strategic stability], *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya* [World economics and international relations], June 1988, 23—31. For analysis of these paradigms, see Graham H. Turbiville, Jr. and David M. Glantz, "Soviet Military Strategy: Context and Future Prospects," (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1989) and David M. Glantz, "Soviet Military Strategy After CFE: Historical Models and Future Prospects," (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1990).

4. According to conversations with General Larionov in January 1990, the Svechin-Tukhachevsky debates of the late 1920s are being reexamined and the initial conclusion is that Svechin had the correct idea. A four-volume set on the works of Svechin will be released in four years. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that Svechin was a nonperson until two or three years ago.

5. Closed debates and discussions within the General Staff seem likely, as was the case in the early 1960s when the implications of nuclear weapons and the associated "revolution in military affairs" received focused attention. Soviet professional military journals have always carried articles on defense, as was the case during the period preceding the announcement of the defensive doctrine. Finally, however, the adoption of the defensive doctrine seems to have been driven by economic and political, not military factors.

6. Western analysts have traditionally translated *polosa obespecheniya* as security zone and applied it to operational and tactical defense. The term more accurately translates as "security belt" and is an integral part of the Soviet belt defensive system. It is an operational term. Tactically, battalions employ *boyevoye okhraneniye* [combat outpost], regiments may employ *peredovaya pozitsiya* [forward position] and divisions fight the "security zone" battle as directed by army.

7. *Polosa obespecheniya* [Security zone], *Sovetskaya voennaya entsiklopediya* [Soviet military encyclopedia], Volume 6, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), 430. Hereafter cited as *SVE*.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Unpublished lecture materials from the Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff. The security zone may be deeper or shallower, since the depth of the security zone depends on the concept of the defense, the nature of the terrain, and the amount of time available for its preparation. See *Slovar' osnovnykh voyennykh terminov* [Dictionary of basic military terms] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965) translated by the US Air Force as Volume Number 9 of the Soviet Military Thought Series, 167—168. John Erickson states that the security zone may extend to a depth of 30 kilometers at *front* level and 16 kilometers at division level. This "division level" security zone is most likely the army security zone—which is fought by the division. See John Erickson, Lynn Hansen and William Schneider, *Soviet Ground Forces: An Operational Assessment* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 104. During the Great Patriotic War, the 62d Army (later the 8th Guards Army) fought a six-day, 70-kilometer-deep security zone battle using forward detachments during the July 1942 German approach to Stalingrad. See A. M. Samsonov, *Stalingradskaya bitva* [The battle of Stalingrad], (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 93—94. See also V. P. Krikunov and V. G. Matveyev, "Iz opyta armeyskikh oboronitel' nykh operatsiy" [From the experience of army defensive operations] *Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* [Military-history journal], No. 2 (February 1988), 68.

10. Fortified regions are TOE forces structured for economy of force and defensive combat. In peacetime, they are found in border areas and, during the Great Patriotic War, were used to hold wide sectors of the front so that attacks could be massed elsewhere for breakthrough. There are permanent and field fortified regions. Field fortified regions are not tied to border regions and perform a variety of offensive and defensive roles. Offensive roles include flank security, covering the regrouping of a force for an offensive, and reducing enemy strongpoints and encircled positions.

11. "Polosa obespecheniya".

12. F. D. Sverdlov, *Peredovye otryady v boyu* [Forward Detachments, in Combat], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 188—190.

13. *Ibid.*, 191.

14. Page 7—2, FM 100—2—1. However, during several interviews at Fort Leavenworth with Colonel Ali Amad Jalali on 17 through 21 November 1986, a more constricted set of figures emerged. Colonel Jalali is an Afghan officer who is a 1980 graduate of the Frunze Academy. He stated that regimental reconnaissance elements are normally employed eight to ten kilometers in front of the regiment, while the division reconnaissance battalion will function further out. He further stated that the division long range reconnaissance company is normally deployed to a depth of forty kilometers in front of the division.

15. *Ibid.*

16. L. W. Grau, "Instructor background notes on Soviet reconnaissance", (Ft Leavenworth: CTAC, 27 July 1988).

17. "Peredovoy otryad" [Forward detachment], *SVE*, Vol. 6, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), 282.

18. L. W. Grau, "The Soviet Combined Arms Battalion—Reorganization for Tactical Flexibility, (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1989), Appendix A. Sverdlov, p 199 states that a tank or motorized rifle battalion acting as a forward detachment in the security zone may have 1 or 2 artillery battalions, 2 or 3 anti-tank artillery battalions, an air defense missile battery, 1 or 2 engineer companies, flame-thrower subunits and reconnaissance subunits. Sverdlov further states that a motorized rifle company in the forward detachment may be reinforced by up to a battery of artillery, up to a mortar battery, a platoon of tanks, and antitank platoon and up to a platoon of flamethrowers. A tank company will be reinforced by one or two motorized rifle platoons and other weapons.

19. Sverdlov, 187—188.

20. *Ibid.*, 187—188.

21. Unpublished lecture materials from the Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff.
22. Sverdlov, 189—192.
23. However, this forward detachment reserve may be as large as a reinforced company. See Sverdlov, 199.
24. G. I. Garbuz, D. F. Loza, and I. F. Sazonov, *Motostrelkovyy batal'on v boyu* [Motorized rifle battalion in combat], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1972), 259. and D. F. Loza, G. I. Garbuz, and I. F. Sazonov, *Motostrelkovyy batal'on v sovremennom boyu* [Motorized rifle battalion in modern combat], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), 293—294.
25. Sverdlov, 193.
26. Unpublished lecture material from the Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff.
27. Sverdlov, 193—194, 207.
28. Ibid., 194.
29. Loza, 292. Note that the obstacles, strongpoints and artillery concentrations are placed to block avenues of approach as they would be identified by the US army IPB process.
30. Ibid.
31. Sverdlov, p. 195.
32. The commander's decision is similar to the Western commander's concept of the operation.
33. Sverdlov, 195—196.
34. Ibid., 196—196.
35. Ibid., 196—197.
36. Ibid., 199.
37. A. Tokmakov, "Divizion v oborone polosy obespecheniya" [The artillery battalion in the security zone], *Voyennyy Vestnik* [Military Herald], No. 9 (September 1967), 34. Hereafter cited as VV.
38. Ibid., 35.
39. Sverdlov, 199—200.
40. Ibid., 36—37.
41. Ibid., 200.
42. Unpublished lecture materials from the Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff.
43. Sverdlov, 200.
44. P. P. Vechnyy, *Polevoy ustav krasnoy armii* [Red army field regulations], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1944) para 485 and 555 as translated by Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, 1985 as JPRS-UMA-85-006. Apparently, when army deploys a regiment-size forward detachment the division commander still has responsibility for the conduct of the battle.
45. During the Great Patriotic War and the Manchurian campaign, the deputy commander commanded the forward detachment operating in front of the line units during offensive operations. As an example, see D. M. Glantz, *August Storm: Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945*, (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1983), 156.
46. Carol Brzozowski and Zbigniew Kwiatkowski, "A tank company in ambush", *Przegląd Wojsk Lądowych*, June 1988, 23—28 as translated from the Polish by Dr. Harold Orenstein, Soviet Army Studies Office.
47. S. Gul'ko and N. Zakolodkin, "Zasada" [Ambush], VV, No. 8 (August 1985), 30.
48. Sverdlov, 199. In case of limited time, the first and forward positions would normally have priority for engineer support.
49. Loza, 301.
50. This company or battalion is usually from the second echelon of the first echelon defending regiment.
51. Sverdlov, 203.
52. Ibid., 203.
53. The division commander probably coordinates or communicates his decision to withdraw with the senior commander who established the security zone.
54. Sverdlov, 205.

55. "A security zone warrants the name only if it has sufficient depth, a well-prepared system of positions and obstacles and forces and resources necessary for its organization and defense." Sverdlov, 189. Apparently, a covering zone, with the addition of adequate forces, resources and time, can become a security zone.
56. Research has not yet disclosed the normal width and depth of a covering zone or if these dimensions are even standard. However, due to the lack of prepared positions in depth, the covering zone is probably shallower than the security zone.
57. S. Sakhno, "Rota v storezhevom otryade", [A company in the covering detachment], VV, No. 10 (October 1981), 20.
58. V. Levykin, "Eshche raz o fortifikatsii" [Again on fortifications], VV, No. 11 (November 1989), 38.
59. V. G. Reznichenko, *Taktika* [Tactics], (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1987), 130, 155—157

ANNEXES

The attached annexes permit a detailed examination of how the Soviets deal with various aspects of combat in front of the main defenses.

Annex A is a 1988/1989 Soviet study of a forward detachment's actions in a security zone. A reinforced motorized rifle battalion commander fights the battle for the first position, destroys an enemy air assault landing, conducts a counterattack and then disengages his force to occupy and fight the second position.

Annex B is a 1988 Polish study on the conduct of ambushes by a tank company. It provides a detailed look at ambush planning. The study differs from similar Soviet studies only in the amount of additional detail provided.

Annex C is a 1968 Soviet study on the employment of a company in a forward position. Although it is an old study and many of the systems have been upgraded, the techniques remain unchanged. The study provides an excellent theoretical discussion of the forward position and shows the detailed planning necessary for a withdrawal under enemy pressure.

Annex D is a 1983 Soviet study of the use of a security detachment in a covering zone. A reinforced motorized rifle battalion fights a stubborn covering battle to thwart an enemy attack and allow the main force time to reorganize and launch an offensive. It is an excellent study on the importance of the Soviet fire plan in the defense.

Annex E is a 1989 Soviet study on the employment of a tank platoon as a combat outpost. A reinforced tank platoon prepares positions, survives an artillery strike, defeats enemy reconnaissance and probing attacks, and conducts a successful withdrawal.

Annex F is a 1989 Soviet study on the use of a combat outpost in a border region—apparently the border with Iran or Afghanistan. The combat outpost provides early warning, strips away enemy reconnaissance, disrupts the enemy attack and then serves as the bait to a trap to draw the enemy into a fire sack. The study emphasizes the use of maneuver and fire planning in the defense; the role of integrated antitank fires and obstacle planning; and the role of the combat outpost in relation to the battalion and regimental fight.

Annex G is a 1989 Soviet study on the establishment of a defense in the course of a forced withdrawal. A reinforced tank battalion, under the cover of a reinforced motorized rifle battalion serving as a rear guard, establishes a defense and, through the use of a forward position and maneuver, fights a successful defense. The study is on German terrain.

ANNEX A: V. Vabishchevich. Printed in the November 1988 *Voyennyy Vestnik* as "B peredovom otryade" [In a forward detachment], 21—25 and reprinted in the April 1989 *Soviet Military Review* as "In the security zone", 8—10. Edited by LTC Lester W. Grau, Soviet Army Studies Office.

IN THE SECURITY ZONE

In modern combat troops may assume the defensive either under enemy pressure or deliberately, with the purpose of exhausting and wearing down superior enemy forces on the approaches to the forward edge of the battle area i.e. in the security zone, at the forward position and at the combat outpost line. Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Vabishchevich describes the actions of a reinforced battalion, performing the mission of a forward detachment, in the security zone.

The security zone is organized, as a rule, in front of the defenses occupied by the main battle forces in order to protect them against surprise enemy attacks, compel the enemy troops to deploy prematurely, delay them or slow down their rate of advance. The security troops may also inflict defeat on the enemy and disclose the composition of his forces, direction of the main attack and intentions.

A motorized rifle battalion, acting as a forward detachment, usually organizes several positions, successively retreating during combat from one to another. It may be reinforced with tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft and combat engineer subunits, and supported by artillery and air power.

... During tactical exercises Major Sergei Obodkov's motorized rifle battalion, reinforced with a tank company, artillery battalion, AA battery and combat engineer company, was ordered to operate in the security zone as a forward detachment.

At 1500 hrs in the assembly area, the commander received a combat order (see Diagram) which said that he was assigned the mission to delay the "enemy" advance, repulse the attack of his forward subunits, compel the enemy to deploy his main forces prematurely and force the enemy to attack in a less favorable direction.

The commander decided to organize his defense in the security area on two positions: position No. 1 on the eastern bank of the Melkaya River and position No. 2 on the eastern bank of the Pritok River, concentrating the main effort on the direction of Hill 31.4 and Hill 62.9. The battalion also had to place ambushes in Tyomny Wood, on the northern slopes of Hill 39.6 and in Redkaya Grove.

Special attention had to be given to the organization of position No. 2.

The battalion defense was to be ready at 0600 hrs the next day.

After clarifying the mission and assessing the situation, Major Obodkov outlined the measures to be taken immediately and calculated the planning time.

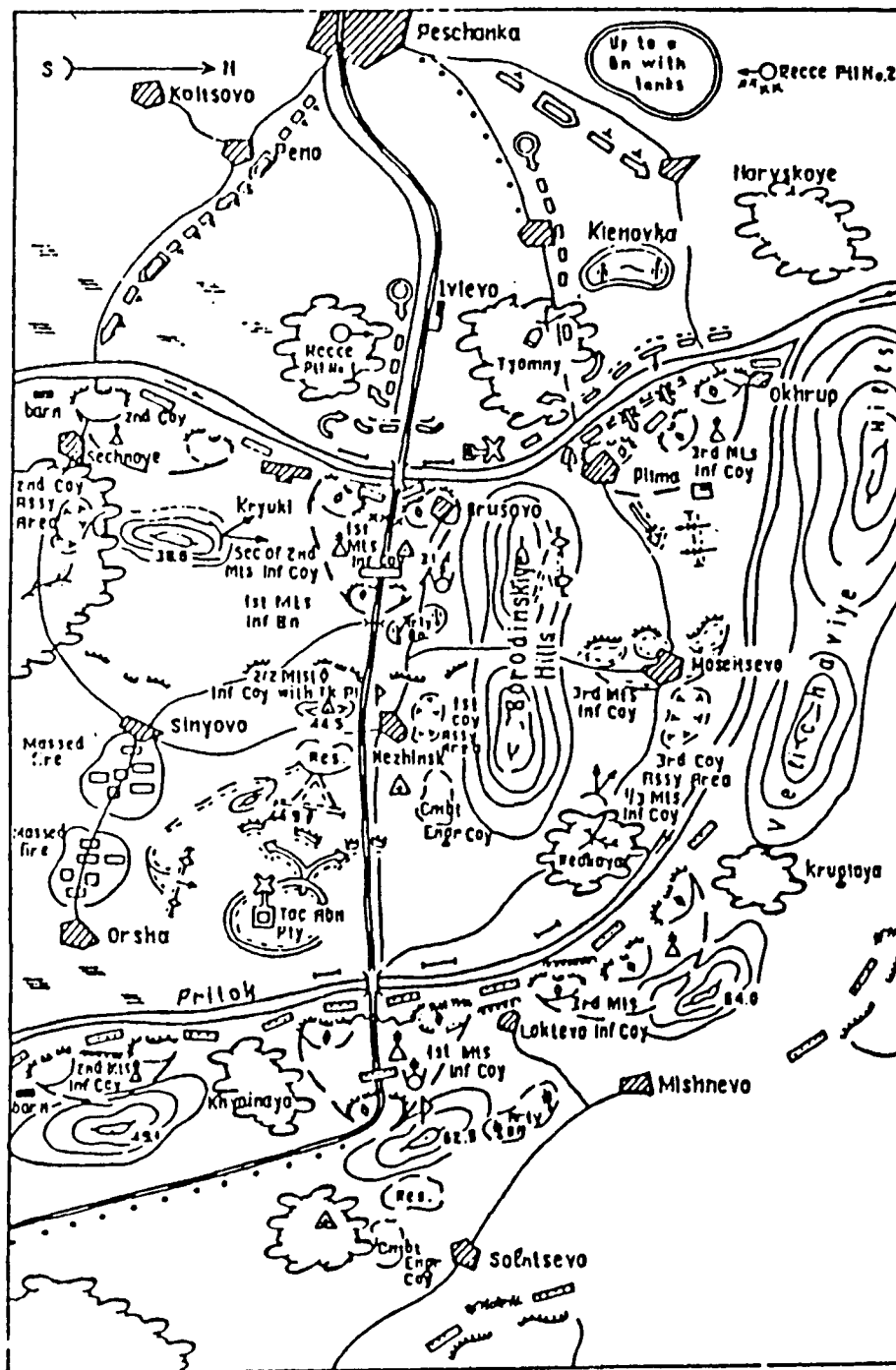
Then the officer made the necessary tactical calculations (the time needed to arrive at the security area, probable correlation of forces, time and reserves required for organizing the battlefield and planting minefields). After that he made a decision on his map and briefed the decision to the senior commander.






The forward detachment moved to the specified area under cover of darkness, using favorable terrain and strictly observing camouflage requirements.

At dawn, Major Obodkov personally reconnoitered the land to finalize his decision. The following is his decision:

"Two positions will be organized in the security zone. Main effort will be concentrated in the direction of Hill 31.4, Nezhinsk, giving maximum consideration to holding the area of Brusovo, Kryuki, Hill 44.5.

With artillery, mortar, tank and BMP fire, maximum damage will be inflicted on the "enemy" on the distant approaches to the defense area, and with full firepower available, in front of the forward edge of the battle area, to make the "enemy" deploy prematurely into battle formation and advance in the direction of the bridge, Hill 44.5. Shifting the reserve units and units not under "enemy" attack to the threatened sectors, maximum damage will be inflicted to his forward subunits to make him commit his main forces to action and thus disclose his intentions.



-  Bn CO's decision to defend in the security area
-  actions of "enemy" recce elements
-  actions of "enemy" security elements
-  situation at 1200 hrs
-  situation at 1630 hrs

The subunits will retreat to the second position in company columns under the protection of the tank company, artillery fire and smokescreens. The tanks will disengage from action and retreat together upon the signal from the battalion CP-OP under covering fire from artillery, two flights of helicopter gunships and smokescreens.

Artificial obstacles will be created and minefields laid in the areas suitable for crossing the Melkaya River, in front and at the flanks of strongpoints, in the gaps and deep in the defensive area in tank-threatened directions.

The battalion assumes a single echelon formation, with a tank platoon and a motorized rifle platoon in the reserve. The companies will organize their strongpoints in the following areas: 3rd motorized rifle company with a tank platoon—southern outskirts of Okhrup, separate tree, house; 1st motorized rifle company with the tank company (less two platoons)—Brusovo, northern outskirts—of Kryuki, railway crossing; 2nd motorized rifle company (less one platoon)—Kryuki, barn, western slopes of Hill 39.6. The reserve will concentrate on the eastern slopes of Hill 44.5.

On the second position the main effort will be concentrated in the direction: bridge, Solntsevo, giving maximum consideration to holding the area: Loktevo, Khvoinaya Grove, Hill 62.9.

Minefields will be deployed on the most probable directions of "enemy" advance, in the gaps between company and platoon strongpoints, and on the battalion flanks.

The companies will organize the strongpoints in the following areas: 3rd motorized rifle company—Kruglaya Grove, north-west of Loktevo, south-western slopes of Hill 64.0; 1st motorized rifle company with the tank company (less two platoons)—south of Loktevo, Khvoinaya Grove, western slopes of Hill 62.9; 2nd motorized rifle company (less one platoon)—south of Khvoinaya Grove, barn, west of Hill 49.1. The reserve will be located east of Hill 62.9.

During the commander's reconnaissance Major Obodkov assigned missions to each subunit, organized cooperation and announced the readiness time. In addition, he gave necessary instructions on the conduct of reconnaissance: installation of obstacles in the gaps between strongpoints, in front of the forward edge of the battalion defenses and in the depth of defenses; and on protection against weapons of mass destruction.

In organizing coordination, the forward detachment commander placed special emphasis on destroying the attacker by firepower. He demanded, in particular, that the "enemy" reconnaissance subunits and march security elements be destroyed in front of the forward edge by fire from only specially detailed weapons. The artillery battalion and mortar battery were to open up only after the "enemy" advance guard had approached the forward edge of the battle area, and the BMPs when the "enemy" had entered the ATGM effective zone. Other weapons were to begin engaging the targets once the latter were within their effective or direct fire range.

Having assessed the situation, the battalion commander came to the conclusion that an attack of "enemy" advance elements could soon be expected, and he was correct. After a brief artillery attack, up to an "enemy" infantry company reinforced with tanks attacked the 1st motorized rifle company's strongpoint. The "enemy" was first hit by artillery, then by tanks and BMPs, and then by machineguns and automatic rifle fire.

After repulsing the attack of the advance guard subunits, the weapons locations which were disclosed by fire during the attack were changed. Camouflage nets and corner reflectors were left at the old positions. The combat engineers plugged the gaps made by the "enemy" in the minefields.

At 1200 hrs the "enemy" landed a company-size air assault in the rear of the forward detachment defenses, and at the same time two "enemy" battalions launched a frontal attack in the area defended by the 3rd motorized rifle company.

In this complex situation Major Obodkov made the following decision:

"One platoon of the 2nd motorized rifle company (from the reserve) will pin down the "enemy" air assault force by attacking it from the front from the line: Hill 44.9, bushes. The tank platoon will maneuver, under cover of smokescreens, around the "enemy" flank and then the motorized rifle platoon and the tank platoon, with supporting fire of one artillery battery and a flight of helicopter gunships, will simultaneously attack the air assault force from the front and flank and destroy it. Then the reserve will concentrate in Redkaya Grove.

The battalion commander ordered the 3rd motorized rifle company to withdraw to the prepared positions west of Moseitsevo to avoid an attack by the "enemy" superior forces, and the 1st motorized rifle company (minus one platoon) with its tanks to take up a firing line on the northern slopes of the Borodinskiye Hills.

The battalion inflicted significant losses on the attacker by support helicopter strikes, and artillery, mortar, tank, ATGM and other fire. This disrupted his formations and checked his further advance. The 3rd motorized rifle company and the battalion reserve launched a counter-attack from the front while the 1st motorized rifle company attacked the "enemy" flank. The enemy in the area: Okhrup, 'Pilma,' Moseitsevo was destroyed. A specially assigned group captured a "prisoner" during combat who, on the battalion commander's order, was immediately sent to the higher headquarters.

At 1630 hours, air intelligence reported the advance of three battalion-size APC columns with tanks from two areas: Peschanka, Narvskoye, Okhrup and Peschanka, Sechnoye. It became evident that the "enemy" main forces were going to outflank the forward detachment and reach the main defense line.

Major Obodkov was ordered over the radio to retreat to and consolidate on his second position. His decision was the following:

The troops will disengage and retreat to the second position under the protection of the two tank platoons currently attached to the 1st and 3rd companies, and of one platoon from the 2nd motorized rifle company. Before and upon disengagement of the battalion main body, the same pattern of fire will be maintained and smokescreens will be used to cover the withdrawal. The tank platoon from the reserve will act as the rear guard.

After receiving the prearranged signal, the companies will simultaneously begin withdrawing from the occupied positions by platoons and assemble in these areas: 3rd motorized rifle company—east of Moseitsevo; 1st motorized rifle company—on the northern outskirts of Nezhinsk; 2nd motorized rifle company—on the southern slopes of Hill 39.6. Upon assembly, the main body will move in company columns to the line: Kruglaya Grove, western slopes of Hill 49.1, and will assume the defensive at this position. The attached artillery battalion will move by batteries to the new firing positions south of Mishnevo. Each battery will leave one gun on the spot to simulate the previous pattern of fire. They will retreat with the covering elements. The mortar battery will be withdrawn with the 1st motorized rifle company. The withdrawal of units will be covered by smoke and helicopter gunships. After withdrawal, the bridges across the Melkaya River will be destroyed and possible crossing sites mined.

Defense readiness at the second position: 1800 hrs.

The severely wounded casualties and sick will be evacuated by battalion transport. The lightly wounded casualties will be evacuated by their subunits and collected by 1720 hours on the eastern outskirts of Mishnevo for transfer to the regimental aid station.

Damaged equipment and armaments will be turned over to the senior commander's repair facilities by 1730 hrs in the vicinity of Solntsevo.

... Vigorously defending the second position, the forward detachment forced the "enemy" to deploy his main force and advance in a disadvantageous direction, thus creating favorable conditions for his complete rout by the defender's main forces.

In this complex training battle the battalion's success was determined by the commander's knowledge of "enemy" tactics; the capabilities of his own subunits; by his ability to foresee the development of the battle; by timely, appropriate decisions; and by the coordinated actions of battalion personnel.

A TANK COMPANY IN AMBUSH

The destruction of an enemy from ambush has been known and used in battle since the most remote times, since it is a very effective method. A well-organized ambush makes it possible even for small forces to achieve surprise and to swiftly destroy superior enemy forces.

It is envisioned that modern battle, characterized by great maneuverability, rapid changes in the situation, and open flanks and gaps in the grouping of the fighting forces, will favor mutual penetration by forces from both opposing sides. Because of this it will be possible to use ambushes both on the offense and the defense.

Today's tanks, the most important features of which are maneuverability, firepower, and resistance to enemy fire, are effective assets in a battle from an ambush. The use of tank subunits for organizing ambushes is advantageous and desirable.¹

In analyzing battle regulations, especially those dealing with ambushes,² it is easy to observe that the forces which must be allotted to organize them are not precisely specified (with the exception of point 287 in part II of the battle regulations). There is only mention of using tank subunits. Therefore, it can be admitted that the foundation for using tank companies to prepare ambushes is not incompatible with the "spirit" of the regulations. In the case of subunits larger than a company, the execution of this mission would be relatively difficult, for it would require considerably more time. In addition to this, such an ambush would be easier for the enemy to detect. Nevertheless, we note that on the battlefield a situation can arise in which it would be expedient to use forces even larger than a company to organize an ambush, especially under advantageous terrain conditions.

In the offensive, ambushes can be organized after penetrating (overcoming) the forward edge of the enemy defense. These ambushes are most often situated in the depth of the enemy defense with the purpose of destroying forces approaching from the depth (arriving for a counterattack, for example) or withdrawing, or forces intending to occupy the next favorable terrain line. A tank company operating in the first echelon of the advancing troops, which has broken through into the depth of the defense and gone over to the pursuit, can receive an ambush mission. Ambush missions can also be given to tank companies of independent units operating deep in the enemy rear.

In the defense, ambushes can be organized in front of the forward edge of the battle area (in the security zone or in conjunction with a forward position, for example). Their purpose is to destroy enemy reconnaissance elements or forces approaching the forward edge of the defense. They can also be prepared in gaps and at junctions or in the depth of the defense to destroy forces which have broken through or have been airlanded. A tank company which is in the second echelon (reserve), or which has been designated for combat in the security zone or at a forward position can receive these missions.

A company commander can receive a mission concerning the organization of an ambush before battle or during it. This will depend on the actual combat situation. A superior usually assigns the mission before battle when the ambush is taken into account in his plan for fighting the battle. It should be assumed that, in the presence of great maneuverability and frequent changes of the situation, and gaps which arise in the grouping of the fighting forces, these missions will be assigned more frequently during battle. Commanders will often organize them on their own initiative, without waiting for an order from above. Therefore, subunits organizing an ambush will not have time to dig trenches or cover for tanks (equipment) and their commanders often will be compelled to make a decision in a very short period of time, even on the march to the area of the ambush. Therefore, the need for appropriate preparation of commanders and subunits for swiftly organizing ambushes in a limited time is legitimate.³

Work of the Company Commander

We understand the concept of "organization of an ambush" as the activities of a tank company commander and his subordinates carried out for the purpose of destroying an enemy who will be attacking the company. We assume that it begins after receiving the mission (and if a superior does not assign such a mission—after

the decision of the tank company commander to prepare an ambush); it ends from the moment that the command is given to open fire against the enemy.

In examining the organization of an ambush as a series of actions, one can separate the activities of the tank company commander (we will call them the troop leading steps of the tank company commander) and the activities of the subordinates (platoon commanders and tanks).

There exist various opinions on the theme of the troop leading steps of the commander while organizing an ambush. Some think that regulations should be strictly adhered to, and they distinguish the following steps in the work of the commander: analyzing the mission, evaluating the situation, making the decision, having the decision confirmed by a superior, issuing the combat order, and coordinating for combat, technical, and rear support as well as for control and assistance. Others state that the subunit commander will always be working in a limited amount of time; therefore, that the work should encompass, above all, the organization of a system of fire. It is easy to imagine a situation where the company commander's time for conducting troop leading steps in organizing an ambush will be very limited, e.g., when after arriving at the area for the ambush an enemy column immediately appears. Then the entire work of the company commander will rest on issuing a command concerning the destruction of this column and the direction of fire. The result will be the same (complete destruction of the enemy column) as if the tank company had arrived at the ambush area considerably earlier, and the commander has prepared the ambush for several hours. One can conclude from this example that the troop leading steps of a tank company commander in organizing an ambush in a limited amount of time can be omitted, and it is sufficient to "lie in wait" for the enemy in an advantageous area and open fire from the moment of his appearance.

Of course, when organizing an ambush, especially in a short period of time, a company commander will not be able to make a precise analysis or evaluation of the situation. The lack of time also makes it impossible for subordinates (platoon and tank commanders) to analyze and evaluate it. On the other hand, it seems that limiting the work of the commander exclusively to organizing the system of fire, and lying in wait for the enemy in a convenient place and opening fire against him is a considerable simplification of the problem.

We think that the commander's troop leading steps in organizing an ambush should also take place in the case where it is organized in a limited period of time, for one should not give up any activities which can contribute to the rapid and effective routing (destruction) of the enemy. Therefore, we present a general model of work (actions) which can be used in many different situations. We examine the work from the point of view of the principal activities which are necessary (must be carried out) in the organization of an ambush. Among those activities are the following:

- selecting the site (area) of the ambush on the basis of a map (if the superior has not specified the area in the mission);
- moving the tank company to the site (area) of the ambush (or in its environs);
- decision-making;
- assigning combat missions to platoons;⁴
- controlling the execution of assigned missions and rendering assistance to subordinates.

The selection of an appropriate site (area) for the ambush should be combined with an evaluation of the terrain. More than once the effectiveness of an ambush has been determined by this. A site should be selected which provides the following:

- covert deployment and good conditions for camouflaging tanks;
- favorable conditions for observation and firing, especially from the line from which fire against the enemy will be conducted;
- conditions under which it will be difficult for the ambushed enemy to maneuver or to protect his forces.

After specifying this site (area) on the basis of a map, the tank company commander should locate the company in its vicinity (the so-called waiting area); in case of a very limited time for organizing the ambush the company is organized for combat directly at the place of its preparation. Here attention must be focused on not arousing the enemy's suspicions (e.g., by leaving caterpillar tracks). Therefore, the proper approach to the ambush area acquires important significance. This is presented in figure 1. In the discussed variants it is assumed that the company will approach from the direction from which the enemy is expected.

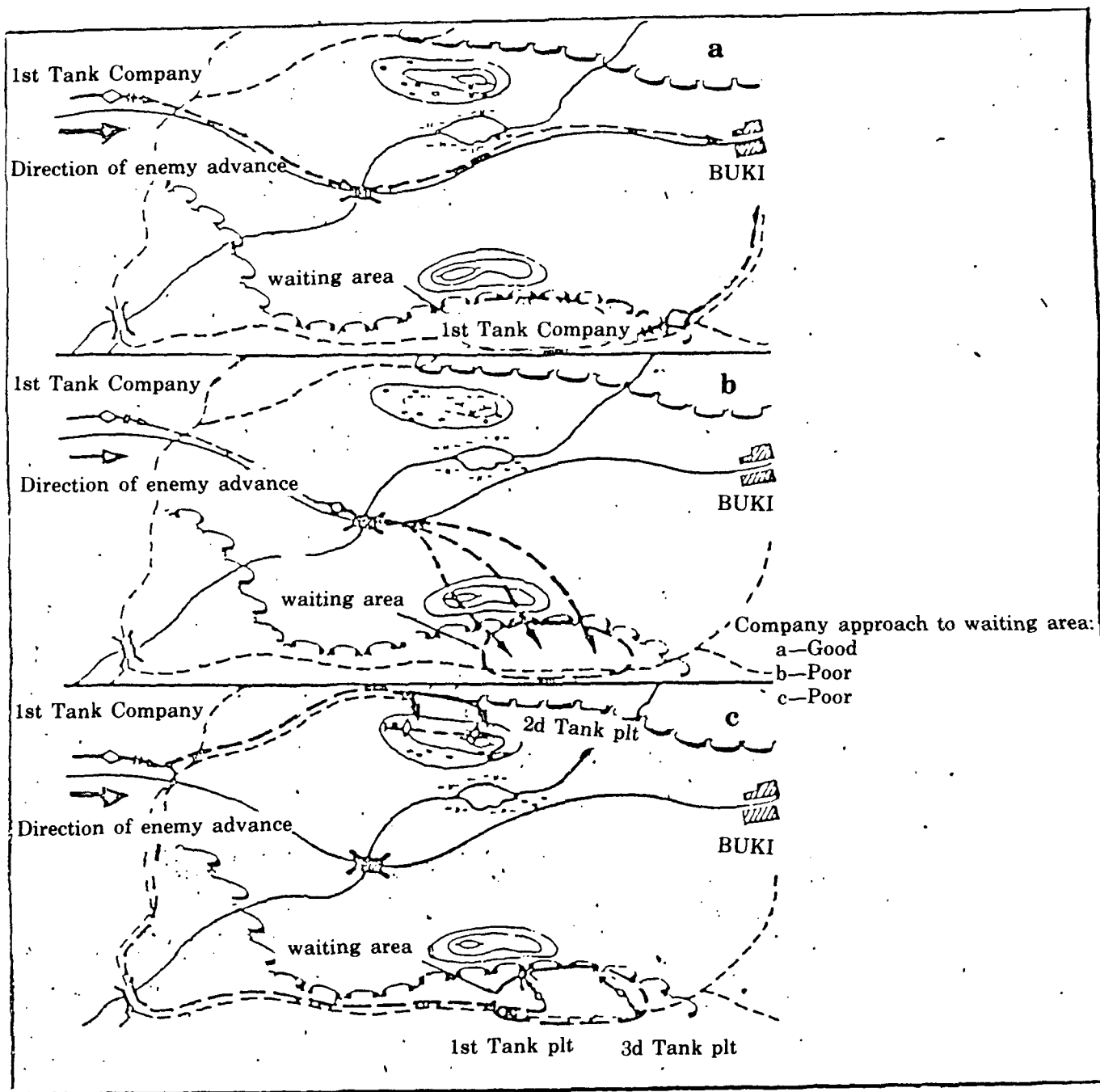


Figure 1

The waiting area should allow for covert deployment of tanks, their skillful arrival at the fire line, and its occupation in a short period of time. Therefore, the distance from the fire line to the waiting area should not be great (200—300 meters, and even less), and the approach roads should be favorable ones.

Terrain evaluation has as its purpose to draw conclusions concerning the best use possible of available forces on the selected terrain. Above all, the commander should consider the following in this evaluation:

- terrain objects which can serve as orientation points;
- probable directions of enemy approach;
- area (region) in which enemy forces will most advantageously be fired upon and destroyed;
- number of dead and concealed zones, and areas from which they can be fired upon and observed;
- the most advantageous method for deploying tanks;
- area for assembling the company after completing the mission.

In specifying orientation points, the commander should immediately choose names for them, taking into consideration characteristic features, e.g., "birch grove," "yellow hill," "red roof," etc.

In analyzing the probable directions of enemy approach, attention should be focused on whether he can bypass the ambush area or come upon tanks which will be in the waiting area. For the purpose of making such a maneuver difficult, if time permits and means are available, the commander should consider the possibility of setting up engineer obstacles on the detour road(s). These can be tank traps, mine groups, etc.

In determining the most advantageous place for destroying the enemy, one should be chosen in which forces which will fall into the ambush will not be able to deploy, conceal dismounted infantry and remaining equipment, or attack tanks taking part in the ambush. It is also necessary to determine the enemy's capability to withdraw (escape).

In choosing the best method for deploying tanks, the commander should take into consideration hidden and dead zones and areas from which they can be observed and fired upon. Also essential are conditions for camouflaging tanks in the area of their deployment (on the fire line), as well as meteorological conditions (precipitation or fog will have a definite effect on visibility, and the force and direction of the wind will influence fire accuracy and effectiveness of camouflage by smoke used by the enemy).

A tank company in ambush can destroy the enemy by means of the entirety of its forces from one fire line, or by platoons from individual lines. In figure 2 a variant of deploying a company by platoons is given. The 2d platoon is on the fire line on which conditions for camouflaging and covering tanks from enemy observation are very good. Meanwhile, the 1st and 3d platoons and the company commander are in the waiting area ("Brzozowy" forest). Tank platoons in this area are formed in columns, which allows for a swift arrival at the fire line. This line is located in the vicinity of the waiting area. Such a tank deployment makes it possible to destroy the enemy from two directions (cross fire). First the 2d platoon opens fire, which results in the fact that enemy forces deploy and attack precisely this platoon. Then the tanks from the 1st and 3d platoons will be able, in a sense more safely, to destroy the enemy.

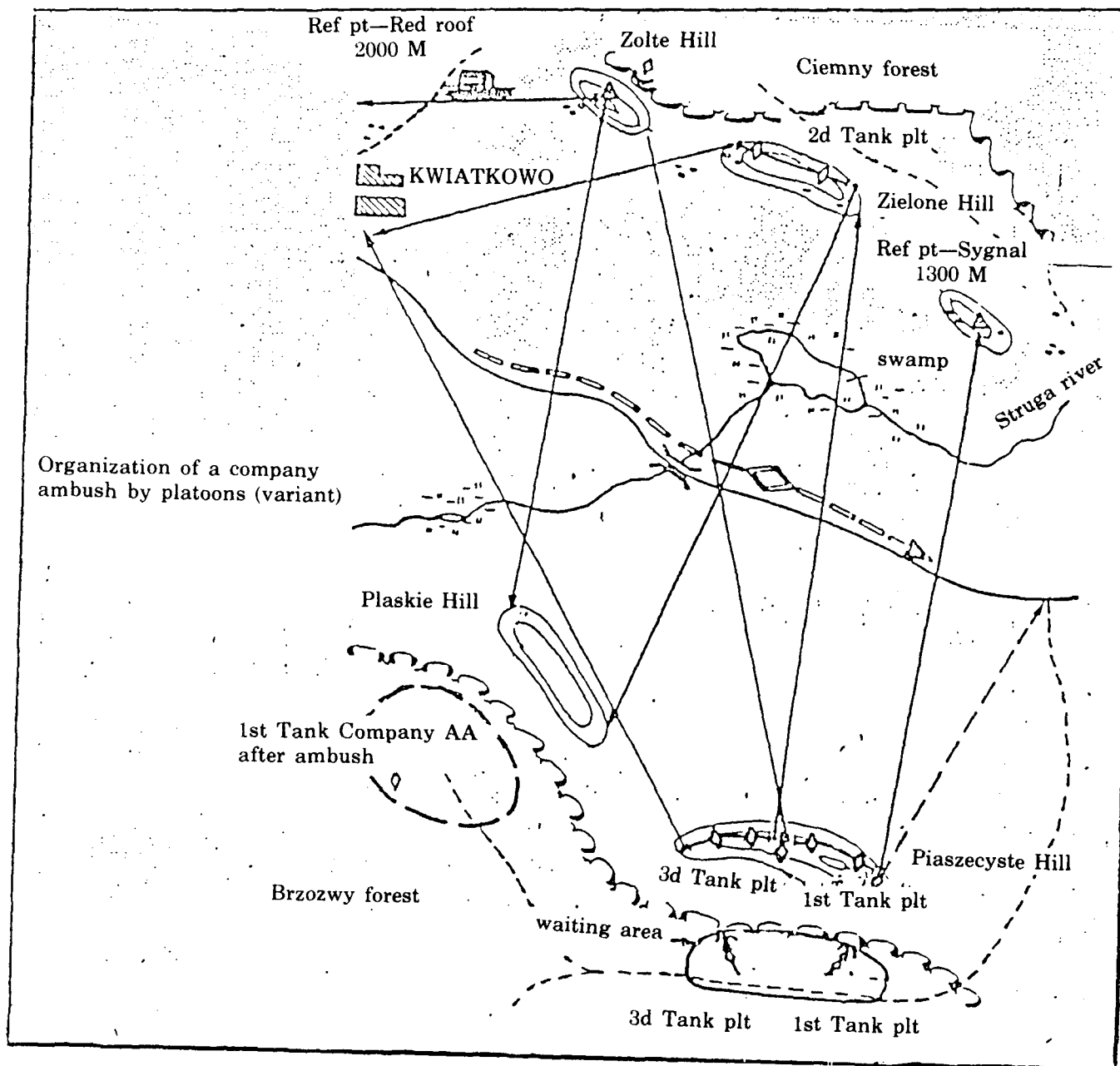


Figure 2

In figure 3 a variant is presented in which the company is located in the waiting area (the entirety of the forces).

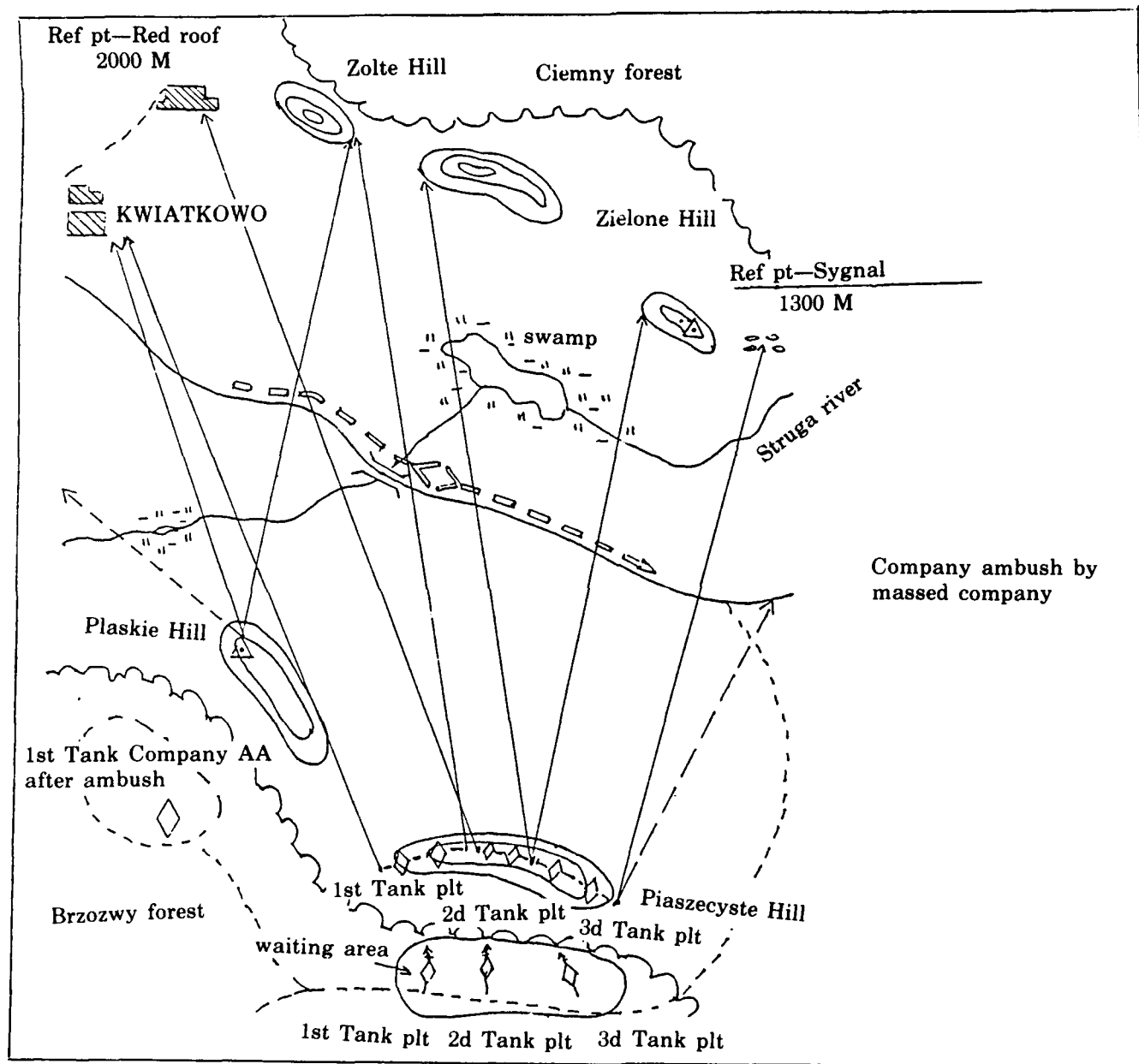


Figure 3

Platoon fire lines are located next to one other. This variant can be used when there is no possibility of deploying part of the forces in another area (e.g., when there is too little time, or under unfavorable terrain conditions) or of destroying the enemy by cross fire.

It should be noted that when organizing an ambush in a limited amount of time, usually the second variant, i.e., destruction of the enemy by means of the entirety of the forces from a single line, is used, because the deployment of platoons in various areas which are removed from one another requires time necessary for regrouping and camouflaging tanks. However, we note that with a well-trained company, it is possible to use the first variant, i.e., deployment of platoons on lines considerably removed from one another, because platoons can be sent out to a specific area in the initial phase of organizing the ambush and their missions can be refined by radio.

During the reconnaissance and evaluation of the terrain, the company commander should consider the method for conducting observation and notification of the enemy's approach. The choice of appropriate areas for deploying the observation post is particularly important. This should be an area which makes it possible, above all, to conveniently observe the anticipated direction of enemy approach, at as great a depth as possible, and with good camouflage.

The tank company commander can designate 1—2 crews (with tanks) to conduct observation. At the same time, these forces can be ambush security. After the approach of the enemy to the specific area and the opening of fire by the main company forces, these tank crews, while still conducting observation, should also actively engage in the battle.

After completing the evaluation of the terrain and decision-making, the tank company commander should conduct further work jointly with platoon commanders and even with tank commanders. The time of work on the organization of the ambush will be significantly reduced if immediately after the company occupies the waiting (staging) area its commander begins to evaluate the terrain, and the platoon (and tank) commanders make their way to the designated area. In such a case the crews remaining in the waiting area must be ready to leave immediately for the fire line (to their own commanders), because the enemy can appear while the tank company commander is working with the platoon and tank commanders.

After making his decision, the tank company commander should assign combat missions to the platoon commanders. Tank commanders should be present when the missions are assigned.

The content of the missions depends on the actual situation. However, in each case it is necessary to specify what is to be done and who is to do it. The make-up of the mission (order) can be as follows:

- specification of orientation points;
- transmission of principal data (information) on the enemy, especially the direction and time of approach of probable forces, expected threat, etc.;
- specification of company mission;
- upon the words "I order,"—assignment of missions to platoon commanders, in which are specified fire lines, observation and fire sectors, which enemy must be destroyed and when, and missions to be executed after destroying the enemy;
- establishment of time of readiness for combat;
- issuance of signals;
- issuance of commanders location and his deputy.

Example Solution 5

Attention platoon commanders! I am assigning combat missions.

We are on Hill "Piaszczyste." In front of us, beyond the swamp is a hill with a signal—orientation point "Sygnal." To the left of it is Hill "Zielone." Beyond the signal and Hill "Zielone" is "Ciemny" Forest. At the edge of "Ciemny" Forest, 800 meters beyond the bridge is Hill "Zolte." To its left is a barn with a red roof—orientation point "Red Roof." The village of Kwiatkowo is visible. To the left of Hill "Piaszczyste" is Hill "Plas- kie." Beyond them is "Brzozowy" Forest.

The enemy is expected from the west, probably in the strength of up to two companies. A reconnaissance patrol in the force of a platoon may precede the march of the enemy column.

Our company's mission is to destroy the enemy in the area defined by Piaszczyste hill, Ciemny forest, and Kwiatkowo; collect documents; and capture prisoners. After destroying the enemy, the company is to concentrate in the area of "Brzozowy" Forest and begin restoring combat capability.

I order:

- 1st Tank Platoon—to destroy the column's tail; to prevent the enemy from withdrawing to Kwiatkowo. Fire line: bush, edge of Hill "Piaszczyste." Observation and shelling sector: to the right—Hill "Zolte", to the left—outskirts of Kwiatkowo. After destroying the enemy, cover the 2d Tank Platoon while it gathers documents. In case of the necessity of the company's withdrawal, cover its departure. Organize an observation post on Hill "Plaskie" to notify me of the approach of the enemy column;
- 2d Tank Platoon—destroy the center of the column. Fire line: bush, yellow patch. Observation and shelling sector: on the right—"Sygnal," on the left—"Red Roof." On my order, search for documents and prisoners. Evacuate these with you to the tank company's assembly area after completing the mission ("Brzozowy" Forest);
- 3d Tank Platoon—destroy the vehicle moving at the head of the main forces, and then destroy the head of the column; prevent the enemy's escape to the east. Fire line: eastern edge of Hill "Piaszczyste," yellow patch. Observation and shelling sector: on the right—cluster of bushes 200 meters east of "Sygnal," western edge of Hill "Zielone." Additional sector: on the right—intersection of the northern roads. After smashing the enemy, cover the 2d Tank Platoon while it collects documents and takes prisoners.

Readiness for combat—in 20 minutes.

Assembly point after completing the mission: "Brzozowy" Forest—400 meters southwest of Hill "Plaskie."

Signals: . . .

My location—behind the commander of the 2d Tank Platoon. My deputy—commander of the 1st Tank Platoon.

Having covered the activity of the tank company preparing for the ambush, it is still necessary to describe the work of platoon and tank commanders and the activity of the company after the enemy's approach to the area of the ambush.⁶

Upon receiving their missions, the platoon commanders transmit them to the tank commanders. They indicate the observation sectors and sectors of fire and fighting positions. They assign crews to observe at observation posts, to collect enemy documents and to bring prisoners of war to the specified area. The organization of observation in additional sectors and of security is very important.

If the commanders have time at their disposal, then they can make fire sketches. However, it should be noted that when organizing ambushes in a limited amount of time there will be no time for the sketches. Therefore, the content of the missions should also be brief, and the number of orientation points and signals few and easy to remember.

Commanders should memorize the locations of tank fire positions, and, if possible, mark them in such a way so that these signs are not visible from the enemy direction. Branches, short stakes, etc., can be used for this. Next, the tank commanders should make their way to their crews and assign them their missions. The mission order format can be similar to that of the company commander.

Crews assigned to conduct observation (at observation posts) should make their way covertly to the indicated area. Since secrecy and camouflage of tanks are measures which require time, the deployment of tanks behind hills or in a nearby forest is advised so that they are not visible from the enemy side. One or two soldiers from the tank crew can be assigned for observation. Visual communication must be maintained between the observers and the crews. From the moment the enemy is observed, the observers should transmit the information (by radio or prearranged signals) to the remaining members of the crew. The observation post commander is obliged to transmit the signal by radio to the company commander.

If favorable terrain conditions exist, tanks can immediately occupy their fighting positions or conceal themselves in the vicinity of these positions. Then the tank commanders can assign missions and indicate orientation points, observation and shelling sectors, and other data immediately on the terrain. Registration with respect to orientation points or characteristic points in the shelling sector can also be done. This facilitates the precise setting of sights and destruction of the enemy with the first shots. It is sufficient for one tank in each platoon to do such registration, and for its commander to provide the settings to the platoon commander. However, it should be remembered that registration can disclose an ambush. Therefore, it is necessary to do this when the enemy is located far away (and cannot observe the registration).

It is most useful to destroy from an ambush enemy forces which are found in a column. However, he will often be moving in pre-battle formations or even grouped in a battle line.

Upon occupying the waiting area (or firing line), the company waits for a signal from the observation post commander on the approach of the enemy.

It should be emphasized that usually reconnaissance patrols or security subunits will be moving in front of the main forces. Therefore, the company commander should take this into consideration when issuing commands concerning the waiting area or the opening of fire. Arriving too early at the fire line or opening fire too early against reconnaissance elements can unmask an ambush and make it possible for the main forces to maneuver. Battle against reconnaissance elements (security) is joined when they detect the ambush. Upon their destruction the company should swiftly change the area of the ambush, without waiting for the main forces of the enemy. Therefore, it should be accepted as a principle that fire from an ambush is opened exclusively on order (command) of the commander.

From the moment of the enemy's arrival at the specified line, the company commander gives the signal to open fire. Fire should be opened by all tanks assigned to execute this mission, simultaneously if possible. The destruction of the targets should be attempted with the first rounds. A substantial role will be played by the appropriate selection of targets by the individual tanks taking part in the ambush. They should destroy the targets in the sequence in which they are found on the fire line. For example, when the enemy column is approaching from the direction of the company's left flank, the right-flank platoon should open fire against the head of the column, and the first enemy vehicle (combat vehicle) should be destroyed by the right-flank tank of this platoon. Meanwhile, the platoon which is on the left flank should attack the end of the column. Then the destroyed combat vehicles (vehicles) will block the road and make it difficult for the remaining forces to get out of the ambush. Naturally, in the case of dead space, individual platoons should conduct fire, depending on visibility and capability of shooting from the fire lines.

Platoon commanders and the company commander should observe the results of the battle and appropriately direct fire.

During a battle from an ambush, the situation can arise where the company will be forced to withdraw. The withdrawal will take place exclusively on order of the commander and in an organized manner. Part of the forces (a designated platoon) should cover the withdrawal of the main forces. Under favorable conditions smoke screens should be used.

In his order the company commander should specify the sequence for the withdrawal of the subunits and the route for executing this maneuver.

Experience of World War II and modern armed conflicts confirm the effectiveness of ambushes. Therefore, is necessary to train subunits in organizing ambushes and fighting against the enemy from them. Tactical exercises are particularly useful for this.

ENDNOTES

1. This is affirmed by experience from World War II, e.g., battles of the 1st Tank Brigade named for the Heroes of Westerplatte at Studzianki, and the 1st Tank Corps at Luzyc and Sudety.

2. *Regulamin walki wojsk ladowych Sil Zbrojnych PRL* (Battle regulations of the ground forces of the Polish Armed Forces), part II, pp. 124, 131, 140.

3. In speaking about organizing an ambush in a limited amount of time, we have in mind no longer than half an hour from the moment of arrival of the tank company at the region (in the area) in which the ambush will be organized.

4. Some consider that it is necessary to create different groups, e.g., a fire group, security group (see T. Malecki, *Zasadzki czołgowe* [Tank ambushes], *Przegląd Wojsk Lądowych* [Ground Forces Review], 4 (1974)). We think there is no need to create such groups; however, missions concerning security, destruction of the enemy, capture of prisoners, collection of documents, etc., should be received by platoon commanders
5. This concerns the situation presented in sketch 3.
6. Translator's note: what follows is the continuation of the article, which appeared in *Przegląd Wojsk Lądowych*, July 1988, pp. 31—32.

A COMPANY IN THE FORWARD POSITION

Defense is a forced aspect of warfare. It is resorted to in the absence of the forces and resources necessary for destruction of the enemy by determined attack. We try to compensate for this lack by a wise selection of defensive positions and a system of fire, by maneuver of subunits and employment of fire, by engineer fortification of the terrain and a careful camouflaging of the entire battle disposition.

The forward position in defense is intended to deceive the enemy as to the actual trace of the main line of resistance, to protect subunits of the first echelon from surprise attack, and to repulse a reconnaissance in force. By stubborn resistance at the forward position it is possible to force the attacker to expend part of his nuclear capability on regions unoccupied or lightly held, and to force him prematurely to deploy for the attack. This also achieves a weakening of the nuclear assault on the main zone, and time is gained to strengthen the main defense in critical directions and to overcome the effects of the enemy's employment of weapons of mass destruction.

As early as the First World War, defenders often created in addition to the main (battle) zone, a temporary position two or three kilometers ahead of the main line of resistance and allocated part of the forces to hold it. Since that time, in a number of armies at various times it has come to be known as the covering zone, reinforced security position, or forward position.

On occasion, a security zone (*predpol'ye*) of 10 to 20 kilometers in depth was created. It consisted of several positions, which were successively occupied by forward detachments as they withdrew. In these cases the forward position represented the last position of the security zone.

During the course of the Great Patriotic War, our forces successfully made use of such battlefield dispositions. Most typical in this connection were the actions of our regiments and divisions at the Kursk salient in 1943. Positions of reinforced combat outposts were created in many divisions. Thus, in the regiments of the 180th Rifle Division and the 67th Guards Rifle Division it extended 2 to 4 kilometers from the leading edge. It was defended by reinforced infantry subunits ranging from platoon to company size. The positions were provided with one or two fighting trenches with communications trenches. Wire entanglements and minefields were established to their front and flanks. A well-organized system of integrated fire and engineer obstacles created the impression of the forward edge of the main defenses.

In front of the defense area of the 460th Infantry Regiment of the 100th Infantry Division were three infantry companies averaging 265 men each in reinforced combat outpost positions. A strong position was established to the south of the town of Soldatskoya and in front of the first and second battalions. A minefield was emplaced between the combat outpost position and the forward edge of the main battle area.

Late on the fourth of July, forward detachments of the enemy's Fourth Panzer Army joined battle with combat security subunits of the Sixth Guards Army. The enemy sought to overrun them and advance to the forward edge of the main defense. At 1600 hours the enemy initiated a 10-minute preparation with artillery, mortars and air strikes. Particularly severe fire was directed at the combat security subunits of the 67th Guards Rifle Division. In a ten-minute period, the enemy dropped 2500 aerial bombs on the Butovo region and hill 230.8. At 1610 hours, the German lead elements went over to the offensive. Not until 2400 hours did the enemy succeed in smashing the combat outpost and advancing to the main line of resistance—and only in the Butovo and Gersovka regions.

In the Dragunskoye-Yukhontov sector all the enemy's efforts were unsuccessful.

Thus, the fascist intentions to wipe out the combat outpost of the 6th Guards Army were not realized. The enemy was unable to secure an attack position close to our main defense in order to properly deploy his main body. Therefore the enemy was not able to begin his offensive at dawn on July 5th.

During the postwar period, forward positions were established in a number of training exercises. In one of these, regimental subunits of the "western" force moved forward to hold a position well in advance of the main line of defense. The company of Captain V. Gal'tsev held a prepared position and ensured that the "eastern" force could not conduct a major river crossing from the march. Captain Gal'tsev's defense also revealed the

location of the enemy main attack. This action gained time for the west to strengthen defenses and inflict significant losses on the "enemy."

Forward positions should not be established along the entire front, but only on major avenues of approach. Forward positions should not be constructed parallel to the main defensive line. Rather, they should be at an angle to the main line of defense. In secondary sectors, where there is no direct contact with the enemy, each first echelon battalion should establish a combat outpost.

Motorized infantry or tank subunits are usually employed in the defense of the forward position. They may withdraw from this position into the main defenses only with the permission of the commander who established that forward position.

If a motorized rifle company is assigned to a forward position, it is reinforced with tanks, antitank weapons and combat engineers. Its action is supported by fire by one or two artillery batteries and sometimes an artillery battalion. Battery commanders' observation posts of the supporting batteries are usually collocated with the company commanders' observation posts.

A company in the forward position usually occupies a prepared strongpoint defense with intervals of 300 meters or more between platoons. The company commander assigns a squad as his reserve. Depending on the nature of the terrain and the situation, platoons can be positioned in a line, echeloned right or left, or in a wedge or vee formation. Thus, the frontage of a company in a forward position will vary and may extend up to 1500 meters.

On difficult terrain, (mountains, wooded or swampy areas, or extremely rugged terrain) one or all platoons can defend separate strongpoints. Under such circumstances, the platoons are usually reinforced with antitank weapons, and sometimes with tanks. The front of each strongpoint and the intervals between them can extend up to 500 meters, and the defensive front of the company may extend two kilometers and more.

Each platoon strongpoint should intersect a key avenue of approach. The position should be prepared for ground defense in all directions. An integrated system of engineer obstacles is positioned in front of, on the flanks and in intervals between strongpoints. Attached tanks usually remain under the control of the company commander and occupy firing positions on the most critical avenues of tank approach, or are positioned in an ambush site.

Tank ambushes in defense of the forward position assume a special importance. They are arranged on the flanks, in intervals between strongpoints of the platoons or within the depths of the company's defense. As a rule, an entire platoon is assigned to an ambush. It occupies carefully camouflaged positions and prepares an integrated fire plan within designated sectors. Antitank minefields protect the front and flanks of the ambush. Ambushes are best positioned in brush, at the edges of forests, on the far side of ravines and brooks, and sometimes on the reverse slope of hills. In all cases, ambush sites must allow all tanks to fire simultaneously at medium and short ranges.

Under no circumstances may the ambushing platoon disclose its position before the enemy tanks and armored personnel carriers have entered the surveyed kill zone.

Those antitank weapons which are attached to motorized infantry platoons are integrated into their strongpoints. Part of the attached antitank weapons may remain under the control of the company commander and occupy positions in gaps between platoons or in the depth of the company strongpoint.

Combat engineers primarily emplace mines and accomplish the more complicated field fortification work.

The fire plan must ensure the destruction of the enemy on the most critical armor avenues of approach beginning at the maximum effective range of organic, attached and supporting weapons. It also must ensure mutual, coordinated fire between platoons and adjacent subunits. The company commander should give particular attention to antitank fire and observation. It is essential to establish various obstacles and prepare firing tables for artillery, tanks and other resources on probable routes of enemy advance, on intervals between platoon strongpoints and on the company's flanks.

From an engineering standpoint, the forward position is set up just like positions in the main zone. In the strongpoint, fighting positions are excavated for squads and they are connected by trenches as time permits. Communications trenches connect the fighting positions to the depth of the defense. Primary and alternate

firing positions are constructed for tanks, armored personnel carriers and crew-served weapons. When forward positions are established well in advance, earth moving equipment is called into service for excavations and trenches.

The volume and the sequence of the company commander's work in organizing this defense is basically the same as in normal circumstances. However, the necessity of fighting while cut off from neighboring forces and the senior commander, along with the existence of open flanks and rear—imposes a special responsibility on the commander.

The company commander usually receives the defense mission on site. The mission includes attachments, the general location of the forward position, the boundaries of the company's strongpoint, the positions of neighboring forces, the resources of the senior commander which are available to support the company's actions, the length of time the strongpoint must be held, signals, and the direction and order of the company's withdrawal into the main defense.

The company commander conducts his reconnaissance, in the course of which he refines his decision and organizes his fire plan. He then leads his forces out to the site and begins to construct the strongpoint. After briefing his subordinates on the company mission and coordinating their actions, the company commander takes his platoon leaders over their routes of withdrawal to the main defensive line. He then determines the missions for the attached tanks and the missions of attached and supporting artillery. He assigns missions to the engineers regarding construction of minefields on the probable routes of enemy approach, the preparation of bridges for demolition (if such exist along the company's withdrawal route), and destruction of critical sections of road.

The company commander then draws a diagram of the strongpoint which he sends to his senior commander. The diagram indicates landmarks and the distances to them, known enemy locations, the disposition of platoon strongpoints, the integrated system of fire and obstacles, the location of tank ambushes, the location of defensive works and key points, sites prepared for demolition, subunit routes of withdrawal and the location of the company command/observation post.

The company commander's combat order (*boyevoy prikaz*) for the defense of a forward position is basically the same in content and sequence to the usual defensive order. However, instructions governing disengagement from battle and subsequent withdrawal of the company are of particular interest since they are seldom practiced during field training.

In the example shown on the diagram, the second motorized rifle company, reinforced by the first tank platoon, a platoon of antitank weapons and an engineer squad, organized and occupied a prepared forward position. The enemy approach is expected soon, probably in five or six hours. Based on his decision, the company commander's order for withdrawal is as follows:

"Withdraw from your prepared positions only on my signal—a red flare or the radio codeword 'Snow storm.'"

"The withdrawal will be covered by artillery and tank fire and smoke. Dismounted troops will be the first to leave their fighting positions and move along the communications trenches to their BTRs. BTRs and attached antitank weapons will fire to cover the withdrawing dismounted troops and then withdraw on signal of the platoon leader. The mounted motorized rifle platoons will withdraw on the following routes: 1st motorized rifle platoon—along the dam and through gap number 1 in the minefield; 2d motorized rifle platoon—across the bridge and through gap number 2 in the minefield; 3d motorized rifle platoon will follow the 2d platoon across the bridge and cross the minefield through gap number 3."

"The antitank guns will follow the BTRs, cross to the south bank of Ilistyy creek, occupy firing positions by the dam and bridge, cover the tank platoon's withdrawal and the engineer's demolition work. Following the destruction of the dam and bridge, the engineers will give you the signal to withdraw. Upon the engineers' signal, withdraw through gaps 1 and 2 into the main defensive position."

"The tank platoon will cover the withdrawal of the motorized rifle platoons from their prepared positions. On my signal—a green flare or radio codeword "Birch"—withdraw across the ford west of the bridge and through gap number three in the minefield. Continue into the main defensive position."

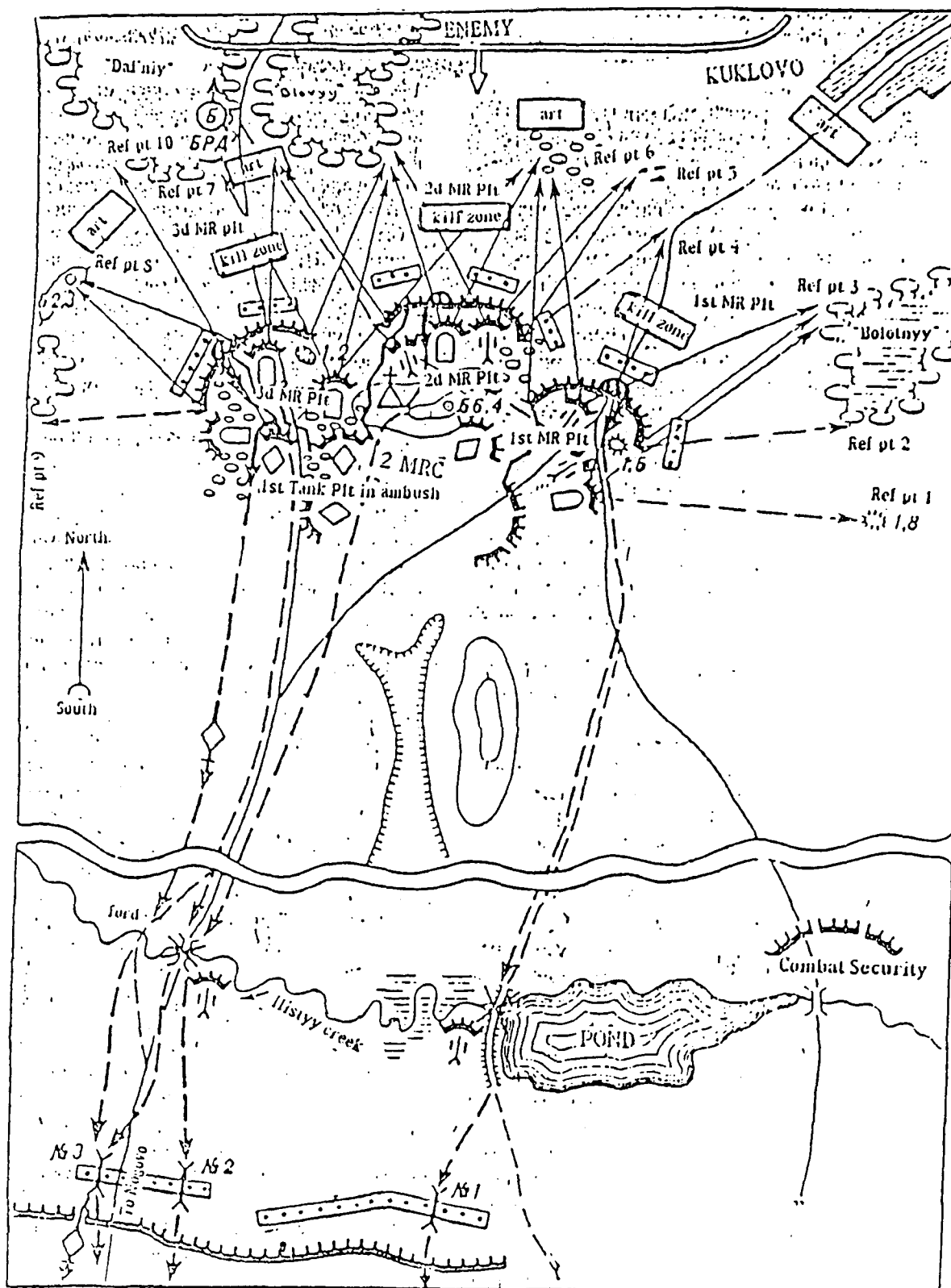


Figure 1

"The engineer squad, divided into two teams, will accompany the 1st and third motorized rifle platoons as far as Ilistyy creek where they will blow up the dam and bridge. Prepare the dam and bridge for demolition in advance. Blow up the dam only after the tanks have forded the stream. I will give the signal for demolition—two red flares for the dam and two green flares for the bridge. Following the demolitions, close gaps one and three in the minefield and withdraw into the main defensive position. Gap number 2 will be closed on order of the senior commander."

"I shall withdraw with the 2d motorized rifle platoon."

"Upon withdrawal, all subunits will assemble in the "Dark" grove (not shown on the diagram) 1.5 kilometers south of the pond."

In order to conduct reconnaissance on the enemy avenue of approach, the company commander can dispatch a combat reconnaissance patrol (up to a squad) one to two kilometers forward of his position. Observation posts are established and constantly manned in the strongpoints and firing positions. At night, these are supplemented with listening posts.

The company does not engage small groups of the enemy. Rather, specially designated personnel and weapons in alternate positions eliminate or capture them. The entire company will engage a substantial enemy from their primary positions. The enemy should be engaged at maximum effective range. Attached or supporting artillery first concentrates its fire on tanks, APCs, rockets, antitank guided missiles and other important targets, and then against troops attempting to flank or encircle the strongpoint.

If the enemy precedes his attack with an artillery preparation, the bulk of company personnel will take cover in bunkers. Designated observers and some designated crews for crew-served weapons will remain in their fighting positions. When the enemy begins his ground attack, subunits reoccupy their positions on a pre-arranged signal and open fire with all weapons.

Should the enemy attack penetrate into the depths of the strongpoint, the antitank weapons, tank ambush and company reserve will destroy them. All crews and weapons will open fire simultaneously when enemy tanks and APCs reach a predesignated line within the defense.

The tank platoon, having disclosed its ambush location, changes its position at the direction of the company commander or joins the counterattack of the motorized rifle subunits. After the attack has been repulsed, the company commander and platoon leaders take measures necessary to reestablish the fire plan, the obstacle system and defensive positions. Weapons and APCs that have disclosed their positions by fire shift to alternate positions.

If the enemy attempts to envelop the strongpoint, the company commander combats the attempt with artillery fire and his own resources. He will use the engineers to lay hasty, surface minefields.

The company fights a determined battle, holding its forward position and not allowing the enemy to penetrate to the main defensive zone. The company successfully accomplishes its mission only if the attacker is deceived into believing that the forward position is the main defensive line and deploys his main force against it.

The company commander uses personal observation, information from his combat reconnaissance patrol, and reports from his platoons and observation posts to determine the approach, deployment and axis of the enemy's attack. He reports this in a timely fashion to his senior commander.

The company will leave the forward position and withdraw into the main defense only on order of the superior commander.

It is best to begin the withdrawal at the precise moment when the enemy's attack has been repelled and his combat formation is in disarray. Massive artillery strikes, fighter-bomber attacks and concealing smoke screens are the optimum precursors for withdrawal.

Minefields are constructed between the forward position and the main defensive area. Subunits withdraw through gaps in the minefield. The gaps are marked prior to the withdrawal in a manner recognizable to all personnel.

Motorized rifle subunits are usually the first to disengage from battle. Tanks, antitank weapons and supporting artillery cover their withdrawal by engaging the enemy attacking to the front or attempting to envelop the position from the flanks.

Crew-served weapons withdraw after the motorized rifle subunits. Tanks are withdrawn into the main defenses under the cover of smoke and artillery fire. As a rule, tanks are withdrawn last.

Engineers close gaps through minefields, blow up bridges and destroy critical sections of roadway.

Upon withdrawal from the forward position, the company and its attachments perform other missions assigned by the senior commander.

IN A SECURITY DETACHMENT

As regiments and subunits occupy an area, they protect themselves against an enemy ground attack by establishing local security and constituting security detachments.

A reinforced platoon or company may constitute a security detachment. A battalion may serve as a security detachment on the more critical enemy axes of advance. When a battalion serves as a security detachment, it will create a series of reinforced, company-size security outposts and a reserve. The reserve will be situated in depth and will be prepared for commitment on threatened axes of advance. Patrolling is conducted between security outposts. Guard posts are placed forward of the security outposts and on exposed flanks. Reconnaissance is performed by assigned observers, patrol squads and combat reconnaissance patrols.

The mission of the security detachment is to prevent enemy reconnaissance of the main body, to provide adequate warning of the approach of enemy ground combat forces and to support the organized deployment and commitment of the main force into battle.

The battalion is assigned a line for defense, an area of responsibility and an area of reconnaissance. If time permits, reserve positions are also assigned. Minefields are constructed in the gaps between security outposts and across armor avenues of approach. They are kept under constant surveillance and covered by artillery and other weapons fire.

Let us examine how this concept functioned during a field exercise.

The 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion (commanded by Capt V. Kudryavtsev), reinforced with an artillery battalion, tank company and combat engineer platoon, was an advance guard. By 0700 hours 26 July, the battalion had reached the ruins, where it received a new mission (see diagram):

The enemy, pressing in on our defending subunits, is currently 40—45 kilometers west of Dlinnaya hill. His reconnaissance elements and special forces teams could arrive along the line defined by the Altyn well, livestock pens, and Ploskaya hill by 1000 hours today.

Our main body is situated east of the ruins.

The 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion with current reinforcements is the security detachment. Your mission is to organize security and reconnaissance in the area defined by your boundaries: right boundary—Hill 74.0, Surkhe Well, summer house. Hill 74.0 and the summerhouse are not within your area of responsibility. Left boundary—sheep pen, Hill 79.5, Hill 70.2 (the left boundary is not shown on the diagram. These points are respectively located 6, 3.5 and 3 kilometers south of the ruins, Dlinnaya Hill and the rockpile); The 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion will prevent penetration of enemy reconnaissance beyond the security line; promptly detect and warn subunits upon the arrival of enemy ground forces and support the organized deployment and commitment of our main body.

The defensive line is defined by mound 1.0, Dlinnaya Hill and the lone pine.

Have squad defensive positions completely entrenched by 1400 today.

Conduct reconnaissance out to the line of Altyn Well, livestock pens and Ploskaya Hill.

There are friendly forces located on your right and left. The senior commander's separate reconnaissance patrol is operating to your front.

Have your integrated fire plan complete and be ready to execute by 0920 hours today.

Challenge is "Howitzer" and password is "Gur'yev" [a common Russian first name].

Communications is by radio. Call signs: mine — . . . security detachment: — . . .

After clarifying the mission, Captain Kudryavtsev made an estimate of the situation and then made his decision from the map. His decision was approved by the senior commander with a few modifications. The battalion commander established three security outposts: No 1—1st MRC with tank platoon; No 2—2d MRC with

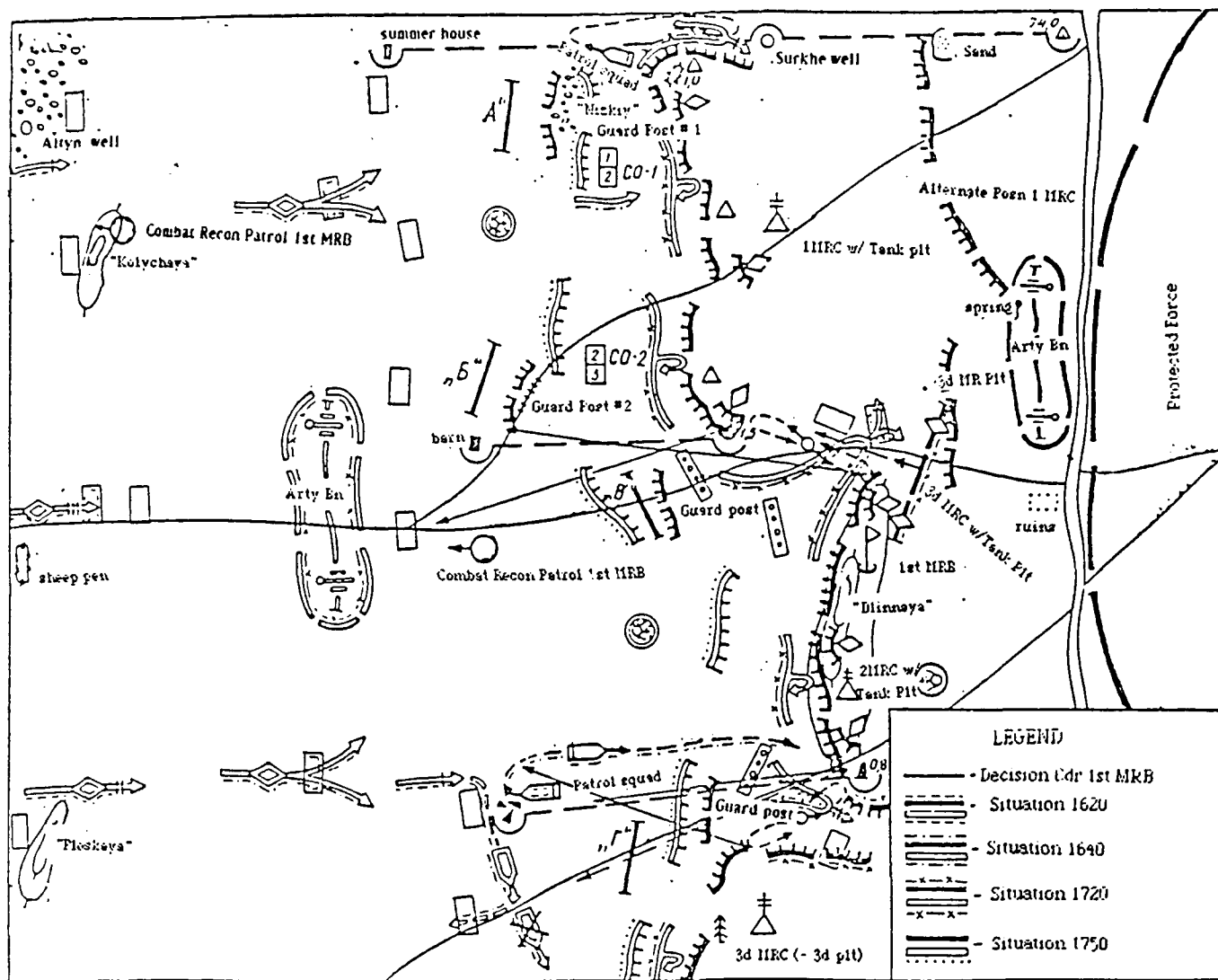


Figure 1

tank platoon; No 3—3d MRC (minus the 3d motorized rifle platoon); and reserve—3d motorized rifle platoon with tank platoon. Then he conducted the commander's reconnaissance (*rekognostiroyka*) with his subordinate subunit commanders. On site, he updated his decision after carefully studying the terrain and then issued the combat order.

Inasmuch as the enemy situation and battalion mission are already known, they will not be repeated. Instead, only Captain Kudryavtsev's combat order to the 1st motorized rifle company (commanded by Capt N. Krokholev) will be given (since orders for the other subunits were worded similarly).

Reference points are (he pointed them out on the terrain).

The 1st MRC with tank platoon is security outpost No 1. Area of responsibility and reconnaissance: right boundary—Hill 74.0, Surkhe Well., summer house. Hill 74.0 and the summer house are not included in your area of responsibility. Left boundary—Pit 1.5 and barn. Occupy and defend a primary position defined by the line of Barrow 1.0, Pit 1.5. Establish a second position along the line defined the sandpit and the spring. Mission: Prevent penetration of enemy ground reconnaissance beyond the security line; provide early detection of the enemy advance; warn the main force upon the detection of enemy forces; capture or destroy small enemy groupings; and, if attacked by superior forces, conduct a stubborn defense to support the deployment and commitment of our main force into battle.

Zone of fire: on the right Barrow 1 to the summer house; on the left Pit 1.5 to the fork in the road; supplementary sector of fire on the right is to the lone bushes. Sectors of concentrated company fire: S0-1—south of Nizkiy Bushes, S0-2—south of loop in road.

Have squad defensive positions completely entrenched by 1400 today. Have individual fighting positions completed at the second position by 1530 hours.

Conduct reconnaissance with a squad-sized patrol on the right flank.

There are no neighbors on your right; the 2d MRC—security outpost No 2—is on the left on the western slopes of Dlinnaya Hill. The senior commander's separate reconnaissance patrol and a battalion combat reconnaissance patrol are operating to your front.

Establish guard post number 1 in the Nizkiy Bushes and establish guard post number 2 along the road embankment.

Establish a patrol in the gap between your company and the 2d motorized rifle company.

After giving the combat order to the other subunit commanders, Captain Kudryavtsev detailed the procedures for passage through the security line, gave instructions for supporting combat actions and for protection against incendiary weapons, and then determined the procedure for maintaining communications.

During his organization of coordination, the battalion commander was especially thorough when coordinating subunits' efforts to secure the flanks of the security detachment and the gaps between outposts. The commander planned for the destruction of the "enemy" beginning at maximum effective ranges. He effectively blocked the armor avenues of approach with minefields and covered these obstacles with artillery, tank and BMP fire. On site, Captain Kudryavtsev carefully covered the most likely "enemy" actions and instructed each commander on what to do and how to do it for each situation. The commander well realized that a security detachment's combat success when outposts are located at a considerable distance from each other, depends largely on the prompt and precise maneuver of fire and subunits. For this reason, he worked to ensure that his subordinates realized the full importance of the mission, executed their commands and instructions quickly and displayed initiative and resourcefulness. To his credit, he succeeded in doing this.

Positive that his commanders fully understood their orders, Captain Kudryavtsev ordered the subunits to move to their positions, that designated weapons provide local security and that work begin. Then he and the chief of staff, Captain A. Uvayev, finished posting the decision on the map and assigning missions to his staff.

After, the battalion commander visited Captain Krokholev, heard his decision and approved it. Captain Krokholev was a reliable officer and his company would accomplish their mission. He positioned his platoons competently and made skilled use of terrain. However, some deficiencies were revealed during a check of his fire plan. In particular, squad leaders Junior Sergeants R. Paulauskas and M. Toychiyev had filled out range cards carelessly, incompletely and without proper regard for the terrain.

Captain Kudryavtsev's method of work is commendable. It permits a rapid check of the readiness of all the subunits and promptly eliminates any omissions which are discovered. By 1530 hours the personnel had completed digging in and entrenching their positions and had camouflaged them carefully. The battalion was ready to perform the assigned mission.

Combat began at 1620 hours.

At this time, the battalion combat reconnaissance patrol on the north slopes of Kolyuchaya Hill reported that it saw the movement of three "enemy" APCs, which had passed Altyn Well and were moving in the direction of Nizkiy Bushes. A cloud of dust and the noise of engines were detected about 3 km to the west. It was not yet possible to determine the composition of the enemy column.

Captain Kudryavtsev placed his entire command on alert, ordered increased surveillance, and reported the "enemy's" appearance to the superior commander.

Ten minutes later, a squad-size patrol of the 2d company, which was located in the vicinity of the rockpile, detected two APCs moving toward it. The patrol further reported that a mechanized infantry company with tanks had passed by Ploskaya Hill in march column.

The battalion commander ordered the destruction or capture of the "enemy" march security element.

The 1st Company succeeded in doing this. At 1640 hours, guard post 1 let an "enemy" platoon pass on its left and then opened fire against its flank. Two APCs caught fire immediately, followed by the third. All "enemy" personnel were "killed" except for two soldiers who were "captured." They were sent to the company commander and then to the battalion command post. This success was possible due to a good choice of position, careful camouflage and skilled actions by the guardpost.

But things happened differently on the left flank.

The "enemy" detected the patrol squad as it began to withdraw in the direction of Rock 0.8. The "enemy" also detected the guard post between the 2d and 3d companies. In addition, firing broke out in the vicinity of Nizkiy Bushes. The "enemy" march security element was alerted and turned to the right and began moving parallel to the security detachment's position and began probing for boundaries and gaps in the battalion's defense. One APC was destroyed by BMP fire from the 3d company, while the other APC turned and retreated to its own forces.

Having detected the firing and the presence of defending elements to its front, the "enemy" began to deploy one company with attached tanks against Captain Krokholev's company and another in the interval between 2d and 3d companies. In addition, the combat reconnaissance patrol reported that the lead elements of an estimated mechanized infantry battalion reinforced with tanks had passed the livestock enclosure and was moving toward the road fork. The defending artillery battalion, mortar battery, tanks and BMPs opened fire. The attackers began to take losses, but continued to advance stubbornly.

By 1720 hours, fighting had broken out throughout the battalion's area of responsibility.

Although the "enemy" advance in the front of the 1st motorized rifle company's defense was halted, an "enemy" platoon began to envelop the battalion's northern flank to the north of Barrow 1.0. Captain Krokholev reoriented his right-flank platoon to the north, concentrated its fire against the enveloping group, partially destroyed it and forced the remnants to withdraw.

The most dangerous situation was in the gaps between the company-sized security outposts. Up to one and a half mechanized infantry companies with tanks penetrated between the 1st and 2d companies, while up to an "enemy" company penetrated between the 2d and 3d companies.

Assessing his situation, Captain Kudryavtsev concluded that the attackers were trying to fragment his battalion combat formation. Additionally, they apparently had succeeded in determining the location of the gaps between his companies and were focusing their efforts on the gaps. Careful attention had to be given to covering these gaps.

It was immediately essential to quickly deny the further advance of the "enemy" into the depth of the defense. Consequently, the battalion commander ordered a five-minute fire strike by the artillery battalion against the "enemy" group wedged between 1st and 2d companies. The right flank platoon of the second motorized rifle company and the reserve were then to conduct a joint counterattack to rout the "enemy". The mortar battery was to conduct a five-minute fire strike against the company attacking between the second and third motorized rifle companies. All companies were to reorient their flank platoons against the ruptures and destroy the attackers in their crossfire.

Subunit commanders executed their orders quickly and precisely. They were not surprised, since this scenario had been envisioned during the commander's on-site reconnaissance (*rekognostsirovka*) and on-site coordination had been arranged. The enemy threat soon was eliminated thanks to vigorous and timely measures. The "enemy" was halted and then was repulsed by 1750 hours. The "enemy's" attack from the march had failed.

Captain Kudryavtsev realized that the attackers would not stop after their first failure, but would undertake a new attack and would try to break the resistance of the security detachment. Subsequent events confirmed his supposition. He took maximum advantage of the lull in combat to order his subunit commanders to restore the disrupted fire plan and engineer works. He also shifted several weapons positions. These measures were to prove timely.

The "enemy" once again attacked following an artillery preparation. This time, two of his mechanized infantry companies with tanks began to envelop the security detachment on the flanks, while up to a battalion attacked along the boundary between the first and second companies. Another "enemy" company attacked in the gap between the second and third companies.

But we will not dwell on the development of further events. Although the battalion eventually had to withdraw to a reserve position under pressure of superior forces, it did so with the senior commander's permission, having accomplished its primary mission. The covered main forces had time to deploy and enter combat in an organized manner.

The battalion's success while a security detachment was possible due to a well-conceived and well-organized fire plan. Fires were initiated against the attackers beginning at maximum range and increased in intensity as the attackers approached the forward edge. Commanders conducted a timely maneuver of fires and subunits to threatened axes and maintained firm control throughout the fighting. Precise and detailed advanced coordination resulted in a coordinated defense. All these steps allowed the battalion to accomplish its mission successfully.

ANNEX E: V. Bezsonovskiy, "Ne dopustit' vnezapnogo napadeniya..." [Prevent a sudden attack...], *Voyennyy Vestnik* [Military Herald], No. 8, 1989, 23—27 as translated by Major James Gebhardt, Soviet Army Studies Office.

TANK PLATOON IN A COMBAT OUTPOST

"The subunits had hardly managed to occupy positions and scratch out prone firing positions, when they heard the sound of automatic weapons. Our combat outpost was revealing itself. Utilizing an ambush, the troops were concealed in huts, bushes, and small groves, and depending on the situation, either allowed the German forward units to get close, or let them pass, firing into their rear..."¹

Thus wrote *Red Star* concerning the actions of a platoon of one of the battalions of the rifle regiment commanded by Major Sikorskiy. Usually a reinforced rifle platoon was named as combat outpost. They absorbed the first enemy strikes, and destroyed his tanks and infantry, delaying the tempo of the enemy offensive. A stubborn defense of the positions occupied by the combat outpost permitted the gaining of valuable information about the enemy, forced him to deploy his main forces prematurely, and at the same time concealed our own plan.

The experience of the Great Patriotic War has not lost its relevance in our day. The combat outpost still has its place in the defense. We will look in on the actions of a tank platoon during the accomplishment of a similar mission during a recent tactical training exercise.

"The position was chosen on the most likely axis of enemy advance, taking into account the maintaining of all-around observation, suitable positioning of weapons, concealed withdrawal routes, and a distance from the forward area which would permit the defending unit to give effective fire support to the subunit out in front," recalled Senior Lieutenant A. Grebennik from the contents of a recent lecture on tactical preparation. The location at which he had arrived together with the battalion commander could not have better met all these requirements. After several minutes Major V. Potapenko put down the binoculars and, having summoned the platoon commander, gave him the combat mission (see sketch).

"The enemy has penetrated the defenses of our forces 45 kilometers west of Ivanovo (not on sketch) and is developing the offensive on the axis Fedorovka, Smolino. The arrival of his reconnaissance and forward subunits at the line cemetery, forest "Dense" is possible by 0600 on 3 September, and of his main forces by 0800.

1st Tank Battalion is defending the area of Hill 111.6, the northwest slopes of Hill 114.2, terrain feature "dark" (not on sketch), 2 kilometers southwest of Smolino, with the mission to prevent the attacker from breaking through on the axis Hill 126.4, Smolino.

2d tank platoon of 3d Tank Company with a motorized rifle squad is the combat outpost. By 1800 on 2 September it is to assume the defense on the line defined by the lone bush to the sand pit, prevent a sudden enemy attack on the battalion and deny him the ability to reconnoiter on the axis Fedorovka, Smolino. Zone of fire: on the right—bush, cemetery; on the left—sand pit, lone house. Supplementary sector of fire on the right—ravine. Sectors of concentrated fire: No. 1—road fork east of Hill 104.2; No. 2—monument.

In front and on the flanks a combat engineer subunit will establish mine-demolition obstacles by 0300 hours 3 September. An artillery battery is supporting. Fixed barrier fires: "Pine"—auxiliary outbuilding, north 100 meters; "Aspen"—lake Blue, east 100 meters; "Cedar"—monument.

Capture small enemy groups and his reconnaissance and, if this is not possible, destroy them. When a superior enemy force approaches, inflict maximum possible casualties on them, and force them to deploy into combat formation. Withdrawal will be conducted on the axis Hill 126.4, ford, Smolino on my command. Occupy the defense in your company strongpoint.

The system of fire is to be prepared at 2200 hours 2 September, and engineer fortification of the position by 0500 hours 3 September.

¹ *Red Star*, 15 July 1942

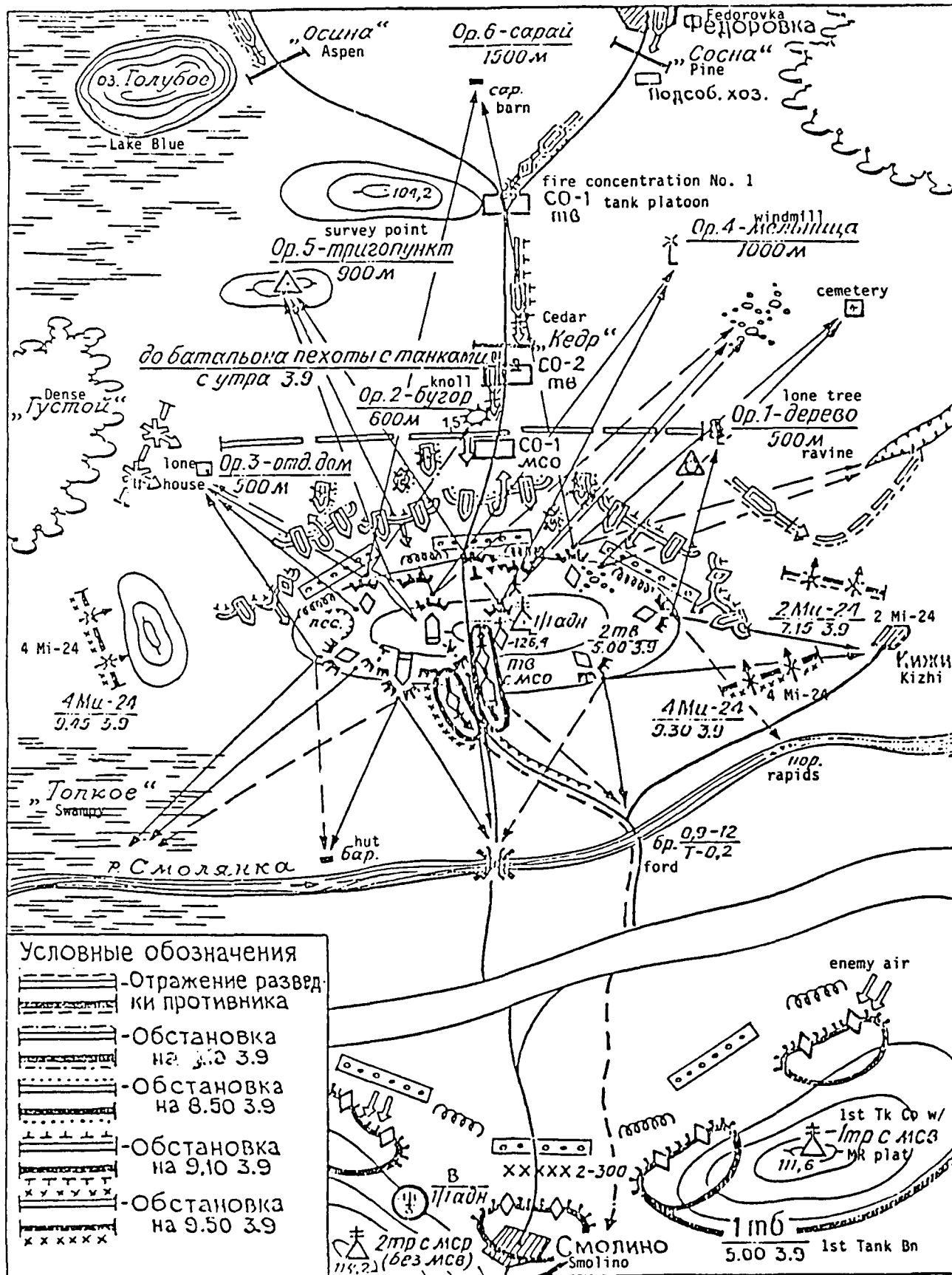


Figure 1

Communications with battalion headquarters is by telephone and through messengers, after the battle begins—by radio. Call sign of battalion commander is "Diamond", company—"shock worker", supporting artillery battery—"barrel".

Signals: commence artillery fire—"covering detachment" (with addition of prearranged [target reference] designation), cease firing—"stopper", commence withdrawal—"Recoil 222", mutual recognition—two red signal rockets, target designation—a burst of tracer fire on the target."

In addition, the battalion commander specified a location and time to linkup with the attached motorized rifle squad. Having arrived at the platoon location, Senior Lieutenant Grebennik evaluated the situation, made a decision and, after its approval [by higher commander], led the combat outpost to the southern slopes of Hill 126.4. During movement the [vehicle] commanders and driver-mechanics attentively studied the terrain, so that during withdrawal they could fully utilize its defensive and masking characteristics. They sited their vehicles near the foot of the hill. Having organized observation and local security, the platoon commander together with his sergeants moved forward and conducted commander's reconnaissance [*rekognostirovka*]. The commander of the supporting artillery battery, whose command observation post was located not far from the command tank, also participated.

On the terrain the platoon commander specified his decision, pointed out the reference points, the most probable axis of enemy advance—along the road Fedorovka, Smolino, possible line of transition to attack—tree, knoll 1.5, lone house; and the axis of the actions of enemy combat helicopters—woods "Dense" and Hill 126.4. The officer was particularly careful, noting firing positions for tanks and the motorized rifle squad, zone of fire, primary and secondary sectors of fire, and [location of] the command observation post. Here as well he specified the priority and time for preparing positions, location of engineer obstacles, and the details of their cover by fire. He selected a command observation post near the crest of the hill, from which the approaches to the combat outpost position could be seen.

Then Senior Lieutenant Grebennik gave the combat order. How this expressed the missions to the subordinates we will show through the example of one tank crew and the motorized rifle squad.

"Tank 212 is to prevent the enemy from breaking through on the axis of the eastern slopes of Hill 126.4, ford. Firing positions: main—near the lone bush, alternate—on the eastern slopes of Hill 126.4. Sectors of fire: from the main position—cemetery, barn, supplementary to the right—ravine; from alternate position—[settlement] Kizhi, lone tree, supplementary to the right—rapids. Sectors of concentrated platoon fire: No. 1—road fork, east of Hill 104.2, No. 2—monument" (for missions of tanks 211 and 213—see sketch).

"The motorized rifle squad is to prevent the penetration of enemy tanks and infantry along the road Fedorovka, Smolino. Positions: primary—rocks, east 50 meters, gully; alternate—southern slopes of Hill 126.4, southeast 50 meters, sand pit, road. Zones of fire: from primary position to the right—east 50 meters rocks, clump of bushes; on the left—gully, registration point; supplementary sector of fire on the left—sole house; from alternate position to the right—southeast 50 meters sand pit, bog "Swampy"; to the left—road, bridge; supplemental sector of fire on the left—ford. Firing positions of infantry fighting vehicle [BMP]: primary—on western slopes of Hill 126.4 [facing north] 50 meters left of road; alternate—on southern slopes of Hill 126.4. Sectors of fire from primary position—windmill, survey point; supplementary to the right—clump of bushes; from alternate position—hut, bridge; supplementary to the right—bog "Swampy". Sector of concentrated fire—knoll 1.5, closer 50 meters."

"In placing the tanks, BMP, and other fire means in the platoon position," Senior Lieutenant Grebennik explained his decision, "I tried to insure that they could defeat the attackers out in front of the forward edge, on the flanks, and in the rear of the flanks, by intense interlocking and point fires. We organized the system of fire with consideration of the engineer barriers and natural obstacles. In addition, for observation of concealed approaches to the position, they remained secret. All this, plus a well-prepared in the engineer sense position, gives a basis to assert that the platoon can handle the assigned mission."

At dusk the tankers and motorized riflemen occupied the position and got busy with its engineer preparation. Utilizing construction bulldozer equipment, the crews prepared emplacements for tanks on the northern slopes of Hill 126.4. Soon an excavating machine arrived at the combat outpost, sent by the battalion commander. With its assistance, emplacements at the BMP and tank alternate firing positions were scraped out.

By morning the combat engineers had covered the approaches to the platoon's defenses and its flank with obstacles. Engineer fortifications and combat vehicles were carefully camouflaged.

At dawn, Senior Lieutenant Grebennik approached the forward edge from the enemy's side, and critically looked at the platoon position as it would present itself to the commander of the attacking enemy subunit. This permitted him to detect and remove traces which would disclose the position. In part, he ordered the commander of tank 213 to tie a branch to the antenna, and bend it to the roof of the rear deck, the crew of tank 212 to dig up the bush growing to the right of their firing position (it could serve as a reference point for the attacking forces), the motorized riflemen to carefully camouflage the signs of their engineer work and tracks of their vehicle. At the designated time the officer reported to the battalion commander their preparedness for battle.

It has happened so often in the past, that at tactical training exercises connected with a defensive theme questions of combat security were frequently relegated to second place. If they were given any attention at all, for the most part it was only theoretical. In practice the actions of the combat outpost were rarely played out. Therefore, in our view, it is worthwhile to dwell on them.

As was expected, the enemy did not wait long. The sun had not yet fully appeared over the horizon, when a "pilotless reconnaissance aircraft" flew over the platoon position at low altitude. "The enemy is photographing terrain on the axis of the attack," decided Senior Lieutenant Grebennik, "and if the defenders are discovered (fully possible, because by far not everyone had observed *maskirovka*), then in the immediate future air strikes and artillery fire on the defense had to be anticipated, followed by the appearance of his leading subunits." And he was not mistaken. At 0630 enemy aircraft flew an observation course to the south over the position. And soon the explosions of bombs sounded nearby, and anti aircraft artillery opened fire.

No sooner had the dust settled, than observers detected three armored transporters moving in file down the road. Near knoll 1.5 they stopped, having sent forward two small dismounted groups. One of them, having come near, fell under the accurate fire of machine gunner Private V. Shestakov. The other, firing, attempted to withdraw under the protection of the BTR, but was destroyed by the gun commander, Private O. Netkachev. The main group on armored transporters under the cover of a smoke screen and artillery fire attempted at high speed to bypass the platoon position on the right, and reach the settlement Kizhi. The tankers opened fire with main gun. Having lost one vehicle, the enemy was forced to abandon his plan.

The remaining armored transporters quickly turned to the left and sought cover in the ravine. Senior Lieutenant Grebennik promptly reported this to the battalion commander. Ten minutes later a pair of combat helicopters appeared on that side. Circling around, they attacked with guided missiles. Deafening noises of explosions were heard, and above the ravine rose two columns of black smoke.

The platoon commander sent a group of motorized riflemen with squad leader Sergeant A. Basov in charge to the destroyed BTRs. They captured a "wounded" soldier, took the documents and imitation weapons, and recorded the usual hull markings and number. All of this the officer immediately sent up to Major Potapenko.

The platoon commander blamed himself that the reconnaissance was able to get so close unobserved. It was necessary to put a listening post out on the left flank, where the terrain was more broken, and abounded in natural cover. So that everything does not end up worse, demonstrate to the enemy great tenacity and vigilance.

... At 0810 the artillery preparation began on the platoon position. After several minutes observers reported the movement of up to a company of infantry on BTRs with three tanks on the dirt road in the direction of Federovka and the knoll, and up to a platoon toward lake Blue and the eastern slopes of Hill 104.2. On order of the command observation post, 1st battery of the supporting 1st artillery battalion established fixed barrier fires at the preplanned lines. With the approach of the column to the road fork, the platoon commenced concentrated fire, and when the enemy went into the attack, the fire of the defenders reached its greatest level. Two tanks were destroyed by the gun and antitank guided missiles of the BMP, however it also received damage. Failing to gain success, the attackers withdrew, leaving behind several burning machines. During a short break in the action the soldiers and sergeants repaired their defensive fortifications, and closed up the passageways and breaches which had been made in the obstacles.

Twenty minutes later the attack was repeated. But this time the enemy decided to strike blows from the front and flanks. A brief but powerful artillery barrage preceded the attack. It was felt that a significantly greater number of artillery pieces participated in it than before. About two infantry companies supported by

six tanks tried to take the platoon position. Having reported the situation to the battalion commander and having heard his orders, Senior Lieutenant Grebennik specified the mission to his subordinates. With the beginning of the deployment of the enemy, part of the combat outpost occupied alternate firing positions and managed to inflict substantial losses on the attackers. On signal from the battalion command observation post and on command from the platoon commander, at 0950 the combat vehicles set up a smoke screen and, using the folds of the terrain, quickly moved to the southern slopes of Hill 126.4. From here the platoon moved by rushes along the predesignated march route under cover of smoke, artillery fire, and combat helicopter strikes back to the main position. After replenishing ammunition supplies, the tankers occupied the defense in the second echelon company strongpoint. The motorized riflemen returned to their subunit. The combat outpost had successfully accomplished its assigned mission. The unit commander expressed his thanks to the men.

Along with this in the discussion were noted sufficiently serious, in our view, deficiencies and omissions. First of all there were the uncertain actions of the participants during the construction of tank range cards, and the preparation of firing data. This couldn't help but lead to strange results. In a similar vein, attention had to be constantly given to *maskirovka*. However, in the photographs of the terrain made from an aircraft, the figures of people and secondary firing positions, somehow concealed by makeshift means, were distinctly noted. It turned out, that the tanks and BMPs did not have their second authorized camouflage screen. The senior leader did not remind him, and the platoon leader simply did not think to get them before the exercise.

There were conversations and discussions about radio operating procedures. In part, the platoon commander got too carried away with transmitting on the radio. In other words, an overabundance of words. It would be impossible to permit this in a real battle, of course. All reports to the senior commander and directives to subordinates should be brief and precise.

The exercise brought to life other blank pages in the training of the men. This is why the troops must be worked more than a little in training exercises, to eliminate these shortcomings.

AGAINST TANKS

In October 1941, the 1st Guards Rifle Division received the mission to transition to the defense along the eastern bank of the Nara river. A. Lizykov, the division commander, allocated part of his tanks to reinforce his regiments and established five antitank sectors in his defensive belt. The antitank sectors consisted mainly of antitank strongpoints (PTOP), mined and explosive obstacles (PTM) and various types of other obstacles. In all, over four thousand antitank mines (PTM) [were laid and] seven hundred linear meters of forest abatis, twenty four fougasse and four flame obstacles were constructed. Artillery pieces, antitank rifles (PTR), tanks, flamethrowers, grenades and bottles filled with an inflammatory mixture were used to combat armored targets. Antitank strongpoints included from two to nine guns of various calibers and a platoon armed with anti-tank rifles. Every one of the antitank strongpoints had the potential to defeat an attack by 15 to 20 fascist tanks.

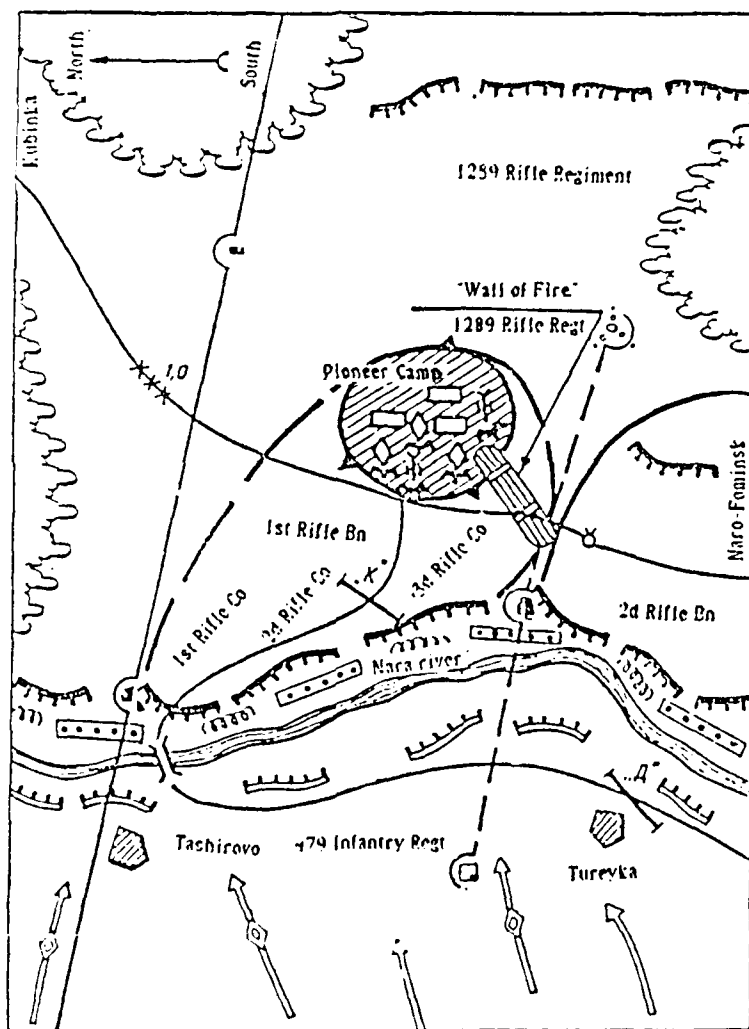


Figure 1

The officers and soldiers of the division displayed tremendous heroism in this battle. Thus, in the antitank region located on the right flank of the defense (see figure 1), the tankers commanded by Senior Lieutenant Savel'eva in coordination with the gunners of the 1st battalion of the 1289th infantry regiment, repulsed all enemy attacks. The enemy attempted by strikes along the front south of Tashirovo to force the river Nara and gain control of the neighboring road. But, when the Hitlerites attempted to achieve their goals with a simultaneous attack along the front and flank, specially designated troops supported by flamethrowers and bottles of

"KS"* ignited a preplanned "wall of fire." This wall was constructed of firewood, brushwood, peat, [torn down] rural buildings, oil, fuel oil, and other flammable materials.

During the post-war period, when the quantity of antitank systems (PTS) in the motorized rifle units have significantly increased, company strongpoints tied in with one another in the battalion area have become the foundation of the antitank defense. Together with this, the experience of local wars has demonstrated that foreign military specialists continued to search for an effective means of combating advancing tanks. Some people even have suggested the incorporation of elements of antitank strongpoints, similar to those of the Second World War, in combat formations for contemporary defense. (These would be sectors of terrain which were engineer-fortified, prepared for all-around defense, and containing the majority of all the antitank weapons.) This was confirmed, in part by the establishment of the "antitank screen" in the Arab-Israeli war, the "centers of resistance" in the Iran-Iraq conflict, and the "antitank corridors" of the Korean conflict.

Contemporary defense must successfully withstand a powerful, enemy offensive by employing contemporary means of destruction in a swift strike conducted at great depth. This is especially important at the beginning of a war when repulsing surprise aggression. We do not have the right to forget the bitter experience of the first days of the Great Patriotic War. And it is clearly not by accident that today, our forces give greater attention to the defensive theme in the course of their daily training. Units and subunits prepare to resist massive attacks of tanks and conduct a return strike which, in the initial period of war, will be primarily by combat actions in the border regions.

Thus, under these circumstances, we must turn to the examination of a tactical training example.

After completing the first phase of the training program, the motorized rifle battalion, commanded by Major S. Kurmachev conducted a movement to the training center. While on the march, the battalion commander received a warning order.

"For the purpose of this exercise, the enemy will introduce forces into the border regions. From 50 to 60 enemy tanks are concentrated forty kilometers from the national border. A group of enemy commanders have made a commander's reconnaissance in the vicinity of the nomadic campsite (see Figure 2) and have deployed up to an infantry battalion in the vicinity. Furthermore, 7 kilometers to the southeast, the enemy has deployed tanks (not shown). The enemy can deploy his forward detachments and advanced guards as early as the morning of 16 August.

The 1st motorized rifle battalion with a tank company, artillery battalion and flamethrower squad transitions to the defense in the area defined by heights 2785.0, 2095.2 and the dairy farm. Its mission is to prevent the penetration of enemy tanks and infantry into the depths of the defense. The battalion's principle strength will be concentrated on the axis of the fork in the road to Kyasik. Firmly hold height 2230.0, height 2134.8 and the dairy farm.

The second regimental artillery group (RAG) inflicts destruction on the enemy during his movement forward, while crossing the national border and during his deployment and transition to the attack. These fires will be conducted from H + 10 to H + 40 [minutes].

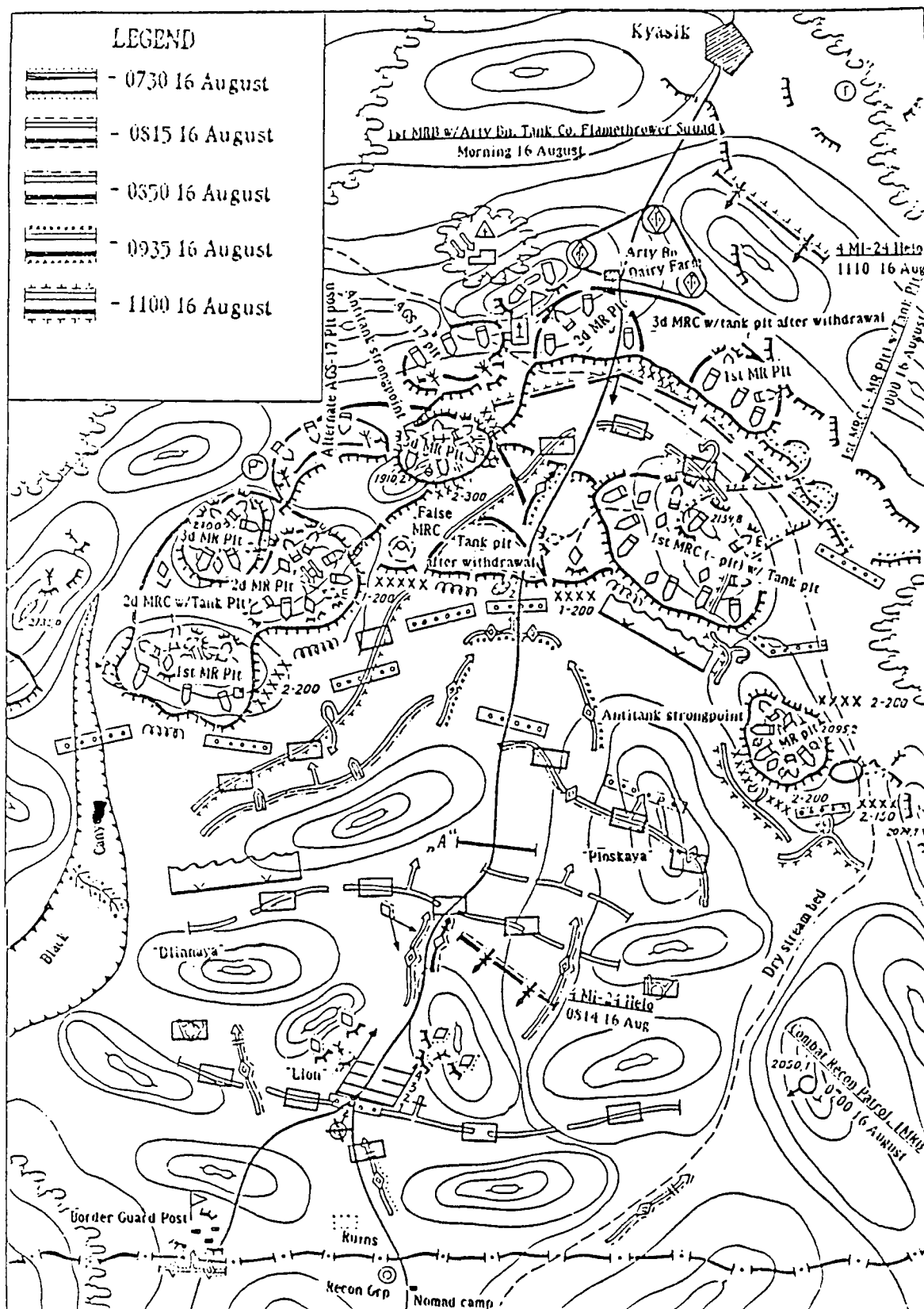
On the right, the 2d motorized rifle battalion transitions to the defense in the area defined by height 2064.2, the western slope of height 2785.0 and the gully "Krutoy" (not shown).

On the left, the 3d motorized rifle battalion transitions to the defense in the area defined by the northern slope of height 2074.1, Skal'naya mountain, and terrain feature "Gornoe" (not shown on Figure 2).

Occupy the defense by 1600 hours, 11 August. Have the fire system readied by 2000 hours, 11 August. Organize reconnaissance of the enemy by 0600 hours, 12 August. Regiment will provide traffic controllers for the march. Link up with your reinforcements two kilometers north of Kyasik at 1000 hours, 11 August."

During the course of the march to the designated region, Major Kurmachev, having pondered over the assigned mission, thoroughly analyzed the map. It turned out that the battalion's forthcoming defensive area extended across a wider frontage than normal and that the gaps between his and the neighboring battalions extended up to two kilometers. Meanwhile, he had to anticipate the enemy use of large numbers of tanks and other armored vehicles. How should he deal with it?

*KS is a self-igniting chemical which is usually mixed with gasoline. Exposure to air usually triggers the ignition.



The echelonment of the subunits in depth, the allocation of forces and means, and the support of seams and flanks are based on the width of the frontage of the defense, the selected axis of concentration of the main effort and the sectors of terrain which must be held to insure the stability of the defense. In the initial period of war, the gaps between battalions may sometimes extend 1.5 to 2 kilometers or more. Therefore, a contemporary defense, based on company strongpoints joined together by a unified system of fighting trenches and communications trenches, demands a creative resolution of the question associated with the positioning of firing means, particularly the antitank means. In order to accomplish this, one may consider the establishment of separate antitank strongpoints."—he recalled from a lecture at the Frunze Military Academy.

The officer immediately discarded the idea of deploying his battalion in a single echelon. To do so would complicate the maneuver of subunits and their fires and limit the initiative. Moreover, the left flank company could not fully cover "Ploskaya" (one of the prominent heights) by fire. In evaluating the situation, Major Kurmachev concluded that the enemy main effort would orient along the axes defined by the ruins, the fork in the road and Kyasik. The enemy could also commit a flanking detachment along the dry stream bed. Having correctly evaluated the enemy, the status of his own organic and attached forces and also the potential of the terrain, this officer, in our opinion, adopted the most expedient decision.

The basis of the antitank defense of the battalion was a fire sac. The majority of antitank weapons were concentrated along both sides of a fairly narrow valley. The integrated and very dense antitank fires were achieved by the layered positioning of the trenches occupied by subunits of tanks, BMPs, antitank guided missiles and other combat systems. On the left, where the enemy might conduct a bypass and attack against the flank, an antitank strongpoint with 360-degree protection was established and fortified on a dominating height. A second such antitank strongpoint was established by a platoon from the second echelon company. Two 122mm [self-propelled] howitzers were positioned in this antitank strongpoint to provide direct fire antitank capability.

The battalion commander personally selected the firing positions for the tanks, BMPs, and 122mm self-propelled howitzers and subsequently delineated the missions of the automatic grenade launcher platoon and the attached flamethrower squad. He decided to use a third of the tanks as a mobile firing element. Primary and alternate positions were prepared which included shelters with special awnings and protective screens to counter high precision weaponry. Communications trenches aided movement and maneuver. In order to deceive the advancing enemy as to the actual location of the frontline trace and composition of the defense, each company prepared a dummy strongpoint of tanks and BMPs. Part of the weapons occupied temporary firing positions.

In order to protect the subunits from a surprise assault and to deny access to enemy ground reconnaissance, Major Kurmachev dispatched a tank platoon with an attached motorized rifle squad two kilometers forward to serve as a combat outpost. Minefields and engineer obstacles were established forward of the frontline trace, on the flanks, and in the depth. A false company position was prepared. Captain A. Bubnov, the chief of staff, coordinated the battalion's actions with the mobile obstacle detachment (POZ), the regimental antitank reserve (PTrez) and supporting aviation. In addition, the commander and staff considered several variants for the maneuver of subunits and antitank systems from uncommitted sectors. During the organization for combat, particular attention was paid to comprehensive support, and covering flanks and unit junctures.

Combat ensued at daybreak on 16 August. At 0730 hours, the sound of bursting rounds and bombs, followed by the sound of machinegun and automatic rifle fire reached the battalion command/observation post. For several minutes, enemy fighter-bombers attacked the battalion subunits. This was followed by artillery. "Golden Eagle 45, this is Wedge 33", he heard the voice of the commander of the combat outpost on his earphones. "Up to a company of tanks is attacking the strongpoint of the border outpost. Ten tanks are approaching the fork in the road. I have decided: When the head of the mechanized column reaches the minefield, we will destroy it with tank and RPG fire. Request artillery supporting fires when I launch a green rocket. This is Wedge 33, out." Several minutes passed before a green rocket drew a line in the sky above where the tank platoon battled. The artillery battalion opened concentrated fire. Again the commander of the combat outpost reported. "We have destroyed four enemy tanks and two personnel carriers. An artillery battery is firing on us from a position two kilometers south of the nomad camp. I am being flanked on the right by a column of tanks. The head of the column is approaching the southern slope of height "Dlinaya". Practically simultaneously, the commander of the reconnaissance patrol reported the movement of a tank column along the dry river bed.

Just as Major Kurmachev expected, the enemy, having suffered casualties from the combat outpost, decided not to resume the frontal attack, but to bypass the platoon and strike it from the flank in order to secure the unimpeded movement of the enemy main force along the road. It became pointless to continue to defend the position. Therefore, the battalion commander decided to withdraw the combat outpost into the main defense and reported this to the regimental commander. "Wedge 33, this is Golden Eagle 45. 'Thunder 111' beginning at 0815. A team of combat helicopters will launch a strike from the vicinity of height "Ploskaya" at 0814. Mark your position with a series of yellow rockets. This is Golden Eagle 45, out." Using the cover of the air strike and masking themselves with smoke, the platoon moved by bounds from covered position to covered position and withdrew into the forward defense of the battalion. It occupied firing positions within the dummy position constructed between the 1st and 2d motorized rifle companies.

As the main body of the enemy advanced from the depths and deployed, the intensity of his artillery fire grew. The 2d and 3d motorized rifle companies, which were commanded by Captain A. Elyseev and Senior Lieutenant V. Starkov, experienced "dead" and "wounded." Several BMPs, which were inadequately dug in or poorly camouflaged, were knocked out of action by exercise umpires.

At 0850, the enemy deployed into combat formation. The troops, on command of their company commanders, moved from their dugouts and occupied fighting positions. The 2d motorized rifle company was subjected to the attack of two companies supported by tanks. The left flank defenders were attacked by one and a half companies of tanks and a large quantity of infantry.

One of the more tense moments of the battle occurred at 0935 when Major Kurmachev gave the signal for the withdrawal of the tank platoon from the position located between the 1st and 2d company into a strongpoint in the second echelon company. This drew the enemy into a fire sac into which the fires of all systems were employed to inflict considerable damage. This also compelled the enemy to commit his reserve. In this instance, the enemy concentrated his effort against the 1st motorized rifle company. Upon receipt of the battalion commander's signal, this company, commanded by Senior Lieutenant V. Kroshka, withdrew under the cover of a smoke screen to interdicting positions. The preplanned variant employed was to withdraw a motorized rifle company (minus one platoon) reinforced with a tank platoon by utilizing the covering and concealing properties of the terrain and the covering fires of a helicopter strike when the advancing enemy combat vehicles had approached to within 700 to 800 meters [of the company's position]. The enemy did not expect this movement and it resulted in appreciable enemy casualties. The enemy transitioned to the pursuit of the withdrawing subunits and rushed into the apparent breach. But just when his tanks and armored personnel carriers reached the northeast slope of hill 2134.8, the fires of the artillery battalion, regimental antitank reserve, and the 1st and 3d motorized rifle companies opened up on him. The antitank flanking fire from hill 1910.2 were especially effective.

The attacker's situation was further complicated by the presence of the antitank strongpoint, reinforced with a motorized rifle platoon, which was now in the attacker's rear. The fires of the BMPs, RPGs and the flamethrower squad in the enemy rear proved to be utterly disastrous for the attacker. Any attempt to bypass the defense along the dry stream bed was hindered by a blazing fire. The attack ground to a halt in front of the 2d motorized rifle company. The defenders had seized the initiative. At 1100 hours, the counterattack conducted according to the plan of the senior (regimental) commander, completed the destruction of the penetrating groupings.

During the course of the exercise, the battalion, along with the increase in tactical mastery gained by the personnel, demonstrated the potential for the conduct of a mobile defense in the initial period of war in conjunction with positional defenses. (Currently this view is not completely accepted). Tank crews from the attached tank company, acting as mobile antitank assets, each destroyed four or five armored targets. During the course of the ten minutes in which the enemy transitioned into platoon columns and then into the attack, enemy losses were no fewer than fifty armored vehicles.

Success in the training exercise was first of all the result of intensive daily subunit combat training, and also the skilled, educated and precise leadership of all elements by the battalion commander when assigning missions. The reward for this labor was the thanks of the commander to all participants and the applause of the group of Frunze Academy personnel who were observing the exercise.

INTO THE DEFENSE FOLLOWING A WITHDRAWAL

While repulsing aggression, units and subunits transition to the defense under very difficult circumstances. It is sufficient to remember when, during the summer and fall of 1941, our forces were striving to stop the hitlerite hordes and had to occupy unprepared lines under the pressure of fire, and to organize combat under extremely compressed time limits. Military cunning, bold maneuver and surprise actions by the defenders acquired a decisive significance when confronted by an enemy with overwhelming superiority in forces and means.

Original techniques were documented by Alexander Bek when he wrote of the example of the rifle battalion commanded by B. Momyshev-Uly.* In the fall of 1941, this battalion transitioned to the defense before Moscow along the Rusa river on a frontage of about eight kilometers. Naturally, the battalion's combat formation was formed in a single echelon and there weren't even sufficient forces and resources for a reserve. As a result, each kilometer [of frontage] was held by a rifle platoon and a machinegun squad. The fascist forces, located 15 to 20 kilometers to their front were pursuing a withdrawing unit of the Red Army and were capable of penetrating a thin, linear subunit defense from the march. But the commander decided to defeat the enemy where he did not expect it. He dispatched two platoons six to eight kilometers forward, where they organized ambushes. As the forward subunits of the enemy appeared, the platoons, withdrawing from line to line, managed to inflict considerable casualties. The enemy, compelled to continually deploy on disadvantageous lines, lost more than 24 hours before the arrival of his main force.

Today, in conjunction with the changing nature of Soviet military doctrine, the importance of the defense has grown. This is confirmed in exercise experience, one of which, in our view, is very instructive when examined in minute detail.

The 80th Tank Regiment, withdrawing westward under the pressure of superior enemy strength, received the following mission: Establish a defense along an advantageous line, stop the attacker and support the introduction of our advancing reserve into battle. In order to create advantageous conditions for the transition to the defense, the regimental commander decided to employ a reinforced motorized rifle battalion as a rear guard to cover the main body's rapid withdrawal to the designated line.

The 2d tank battalion with a motorized rifle battalion and a self-propelled artillery battalion withdrew from combat and moved westward. At 1500 hours, 13 May, V. Astakhov, the battalion commander, received a warning order to go over to the defense in the area bordered by Burg, Hutte and Dorf (see Figure 1). The battalion's mission was to prevent a breakthrough of enemy tanks and infantry along the axis Kreis—Dorf.

At 1630 hours, the senior commander ordered a massive air strike on the advancing enemy. The enemy suffered significant casualties, his command and control was disorganized and his advance temporarily halted. From reconnaissance reports, it was believed that the enemy could resume his offensive no earlier than midday on the 14th of May.

In this example, although the battalion went over to the defense while not in direct contact with the enemy, the preparation for the defense had to be accomplished in a short time, bearing in mind that there was a real possibility that the enemy could launch a surprise attack.

Major Astakhov quickly set about clarifying the mission during the course of movement to the designated sector. And first of all, he paid particular attention to the changing character of action. If, during the previous battles, the subunits had conducted a maneuver defense, now he must firmly hold a designated sector and repulse the attack of the superior force of enemy tanks and infantry. The withdrawal could not be considered as a [permissible] form of maneuver. Located in the center of the regimental combat formation, the battalion served as the linchpin for all the sectors of the defense. However, this did not exclude the maneuver of a portion of the force's strength forward of the forward edge [of the main defense].

*A. Bek, "Volokolamskoe shosse" [Volokolamsk highway], Moskva: Voenizdat, 1975.

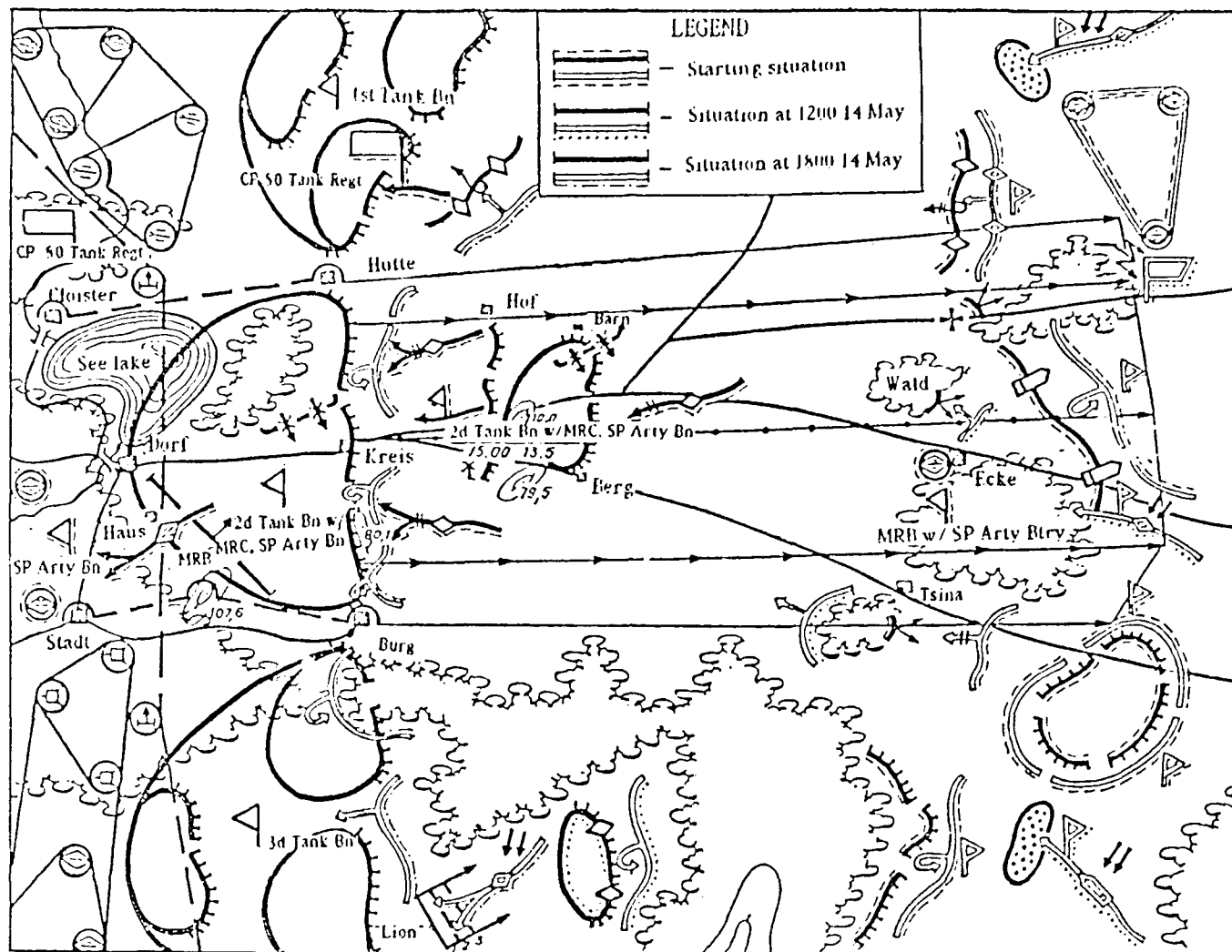


Figure 1

In his conclusions from the clarification of the mission, the battalion commander determined the axis on which to concentrate his main strength, and planned the missions of his subunits, the order of coordination and his combat support. Naturally, this was still only uncorroborated supposition and reckoning. Nevertheless he had already previewed his decision.

Having determined the urgency of measures connected with adoption of the decision and organization for combat, Major Astakhov divided them into two groups: those for the preparation of subunits for defense and those for the work of the staff (assistants). First of all, he briefed the company commanders on the positions of the battalion defenses and what steps to take to prepare the equipment and men. He told the support platoon leader the designated areas and times in which to deliver ammunition and POL. He gave instructions to the Chief of Staff, Major G. Sazanov, concerning reconnaissance, the sequence and timing for fortifying the terrain, and the preparation of data for the making the decision.

The most important element of his work was the calculation of time. His variant is offered for the attention of the reader.

It is no secret that sometimes on exercise the commander's work mainly has devolved to listening to various reports and orders and working with documents. As a result, the soldiers, sergeants and, frequently, the platoon leaders do not know their assigned, clarified mission. The result, it goes without saying, is deplorable.

CALCULATION OF TIME FOR DEFENSE PREPARATION

Receipt of mission	1500, 13 May
Announcement of the decision	1650, 13 May
Readiness of the system of fire	1800, 13 May
Readiness of the defense	1100, 14 May
Total time	20 hours
Daylight hours	10 hours

Task	Description	Time		
		Start	Finish	Duration (min)
1.	Clarifying the mission and determining those measures which must be taken immediately.	1500	1520	20
2.	Orders for organizing reconnaissance, preparing the defense and the time and sequence for preparing the site.	1520	1530	10
3.	Estimate of the situation.	1530	1550	20
4.	Determining the concept of the battle and reporting it to the senior commander.	1550	1610	20
5.	Issue preliminary combat instructions and orders for comprehensive combat security troop control and political work.	1610	1630	20
6.	Completion of the commander's decision.	1630	1650	20
7.	Report the decision to senior commander.	1650	1700	10
8.	Participate in the senior commander's reconnaissance.	1710	1810	60
9.	Conduct commander's reconnaissance with commanders of companies, separate platoons and attached and supporting subunits.	1810	1940	90
10.	Issue verbal combat order.	1940	2000	20
11.	Organization of coordinating measures.	2000	2100	60
12.	Control and assist subunit commanders.	2100 13 May	1030 14 May	13 hrs 30 mins
13.	Engineer preparation of the defensive area.	1530 13 May	1030 14 May	19 hrs
	Report on the readiness of the defense.	1050	1100	10

Figure 2

mound 5.0 and the road) or on line 2 (defined by the road and the tower). The 5th tank company can also counterattack on the flank of the wedged in group in conjunction with the regimental second echelon.

The bulk of the first priority engineering fortification work on the area will be completed by 0430 on the 14th of May. Alternate and temporary fighting positions for tanks and BMPs and squad trenches will be dug by 0930 on the 14th of May.

The strongpoint of the 5th company was established 2.5 kilometers out from the forward edge of the main defense. Furthermore, prepared positions for subunits and weapons systems were located an additional one and a half kilometers from the strongpoint. Why did the battalion commander act in this fashion? As is known, the decision is formulated based on tactical calculations and the comparison of conclusions derived during the process of evaluating the situation. Moreover it is important, that [the decision] contain the elements of creativity, activeness and reasonable risk. This is done in order to guarantee the destruction of the enemy with the minimum loss of combat power in a short time.

Having earlier evaluated the enemy, Major Astakhov came to the conclusion that the enemy could disregard his losses and launch a surprise attack. It was impossible to exclude the possibility that, insofar as only a rearguard battalion stood in front of [the regiment] deployed on a wide front, the advancing enemy's combat formation could penetrate through gaps and appear at the forward edge of the defensive area. At that time, having evaluated his forces and means and the terrain, the battalion commander calculated that normal combat security was not sufficient. The possibility existed to strike the advancing enemy at a distance, force the enemy to deploy on disadvantageous lines and to mislead him as to the actual disposition of the defense.

Therefore, this original decision was adopted: at first, initiate surprise fire from prepared ambush positions to force the advancing enemy to deploy prematurely. Then, following a covered withdrawal of subunits to previously prepared positions in the defensive region, deliver a strike on the enemy with artillery and anti-tank fire and the fires of the main force designed to deny the continuation of the attack. To this end, a forward position was selected which would allow the tank and ATGM fire of the first echelon companies to support the combat and withdrawal of the 5th company. In this example, the battalion planning process optimally considered the possibilities and methods of combat.

During the commander's reconnaissance, Major Astakhov projected four work sites—the strongpoint of the 5th company, the intermediate line and the strongpoints of the 4th and 6th companies. For this work he enlisted the aid of the battalion chief of staff, the commanders of the appropriate companies and platoons and also the artillery battalion commander. During the course of the commander's reconnaissance, particular attention was paid to determining the enemy route of advance, the lines of enemy deployment, and the direction of attack of his tanks and infantry. During the siting of the frontline trace and the construction of the defensive sector, the battalion commander arrived at ways to increase the effectiveness of antitank fires. For example, in the 6th company strongpoint, the skilled positioning of a platoon allowed it to conduct flanking fire on a penetration from the forward positions of its tanks and BMPs. Coordination was effected with the 5th company's forward position and the ambushing platoon and the order of their withdrawal was carefully elaborated. Further coordination was affected with the first echelon companies, the artillery and army aviation.

Immediately following the commander's reconnaissance, Major Astakhov issued his combat order. The battalion Chief of Staff wrote it out. Here is a part of the order in which the missions are given to the companies:

"The 4th tank company with the 1st motorized rifle platoon defends the strongpoint defined by Burg, the southern edge of Kreis and mound 5.0. Do not allow the enemy to penetrate into the depth of the defense on the right flank of the battalion. Concentrate your strength against the axis defined by hill 80.1, mound 5.0. The forward edge of your defense runs from Burg, along the western slope of hill 80.1 to the southern outskirts of Kreis. Your zone of fire is defined on the right by Burg—Tsina and on the left by Kreis—the church. Your supplementary sector is defined by Burg—the individual farm house. Your sectors for concentration of company fires are #1—the water tower and #2—the other tower. The right flank is secured by the fires of your 3d tank platoon and the 3d self-propelled artillery battery and is the responsibility of the 4th tank company commander. Cover the gaps between your platoons with mines. The 3d self-propelled artillery battery is in support.

The 6th tank company with the 3d motorized rifle platoon defends the strongpoint defined by the southern outskirts of Kreis, Hutte and the tower. Do not allow the enemy to penetrate into the depth of the defense on the left flank of the battalion. Concentrate your strength against the axis defined by the bushes and the tower. The forward edge of your defense runs from the southern outskirts of Kreis along the bushes to Hutte. Your zone of fire is defined on the right by Kreis—the tower and on the left by Hutte—the apiary. Your supplementary sector for fires on the right is defined by Kreis—the windmill. Your sectors for concentration of company fires are #1—the factory and #2—the church. The right flank is secured by fires of your 1st tank platoon and the 2d self-propelled artillery battery and is the responsibility of the 6th tank company commander. Block the Kreis—Dorf road and the gaps between your platoons with mines. The 2d self-propelled artillery battery is in support.

The 5th tank company with the 2d motorized rifle platoon during the forward position battle: Defend the strongpoint defined by Burg, the barn and hill 110.0. Your zone of fire is defined on the right by Burg—Tsina and on the left by the barn—the apiary. The intermediate line is defined by the windmill—Hof. After withdrawal, defend the strongpoint defined by the forester's house, Haus, and the lake. Do not allow the enemy to launch a surprise attack. Inflict strikes on the enemy with fires from the motorized rifle platoon ambush in the Wald terrain feature and then strike the enemy with tank, BMP and flat trajectory weapons fire from the primary and intermediate positions. Force the enemy to deploy along the line defined by Ecke—the church, and force him to commit his reserve along the line defined by the water tower and the factory. Concentrate your strength against the axis defined by hill 110.0—Kreis. When occupying the second echelon, be prepared to repulse an enemy attack from firing line #1 defined by mound 5.0—the road and from firing line #2 defined by the road—the tower. The regimental self-propelled artillery battalion is in support."

Organization of control had its own peculiarities. The battalion chief of staff and the reconnaissance chief of the self-propelled artillery reconnaissance were located on the forward position. To our way of thinking, this decision was judicious in view of the especially complicated mission assigned to the 5th tank company. This was the chief measure adapted to increase the effectiveness of control.

A crucial stage of the exercise was the live-fire portion. Clearly, the central place in the defensive battle is the destruction of the attacking tanks, BMPs, antitank systems, infantry and supporting helicopters in front of the forward defensive line. The ability of the subunits to withstand a massive strike depends on the stability of all the tactical zones of defense. The basis of this is the achievement of fire superiority over the enemy during his approach to the forward edge. Fire superiority is the variable which can rapidly change the course of battle. During the transition to the defense, however, the initiative and the selection of the time and place to strike belongs to the attacker. In the operational-tactical arena the conduct of defensive preemptive and counter fire strikes can quickly change the dynamics to one's favor, and provide the precondition for not only repulsing but also for smashing the offense. In the tactical arena, particularly at battalion (and company) level, fire superiority consistently wins in the bitter struggle with the enemy.

Clearly, here the correct combination of fire and maneuver was especially important. It is essential to consider the main differences and the correlation between the attackers and defenders. If the attackers, conducting maneuver, mainly strive to utilize the results of fire destruction, then the defenders maneuver in order to occupy a favorable position for opening fire or to withdraw from under the strike.

How then did the battle develop? It started when the motorized rifle troops, positioned in ambush, detected the enemy reconnaissance patrol and destroyed it with surprise fire. This forced the enemy to deploy into combat formation. Seeking to destroy the ambush, the enemy fired mortars on the Wald terrain feature. However, the motorized rifle troops, under the cover of a standing artillery barrage and smoke, had already withdrawn into the strongpoint of the 5th tank company. Systems of the senior commander triangulated the firing positions of the mortars and the regimental artillery battalion neutralized them.

The enemy attacked and, from a different direction, his tanks and BMPs approached reference point 7 [the church]. The battalion chief of staff's order was already given. "Diamond, target 203, fire." The artillerymen fulfilled the mission within the prescribed time. Simultaneously, the 6th company inflicted a strike on a moving column, and opened fire on fire concentration sector #2. When the attackers, using forward subunits, approached the line Ecke—the church, they were met with tank and BMP fire from the 5th company strongpoint. The attempt to overcome the forward position from the march did not succeed. The enemy began to deploy his main body, conduct the fire preparation for the attack and send out attack helicopters. The withdrawal to the

intermediate line was done by platoons. During this time, the artillery conducted standing barrage fire while helicopters struck the enemy on the flank. The smoke producing systems on the tanks and BMPs were used to hide the [withdrawal] maneuver. By defending on the intermediate line, the 5th tank company forced the enemy to commit the second echelon of his forward battalion tactical groups before they had arrived at the defensive sector. The enemy suffered the greatest casualties forward of the main defenses where he was met by the fire of all the weapons systems of the battalion. Again attack helicopters inflicted a strike in support of the artillery battle.

As over half the attacking force were casualties, the enemy was forced to abandon the offensive. Thus, a prudent organization for combat, strict control of subunits, and high firing proficiency training of the personnel fulfilled the regimental commander's order and kept the attacker from wedging into the defense. During the live-fire exercise, 68% of artillery targets and 66% of flat trajectory weapons targets were destroyed. The battalion received excellent marks. The excellent performances of the 5th tank company commander, Captain Yu. Kobalenko; platoon leaders, Lieutenant O. Gichenko and Lieutenant R. Shadrin; and numerous tankers, motorized rifle soldiers and artillerymen were noted.

However, during the course of the exercise, serious problems were uncovered. We will not touch on those which the regimental and battalion commanders are able to correct internally. We dwell on these more general questions. As is evident from the illustrations, the battalion commander accepted complete responsibility for his decision in the layout of this unique combat formation. However during the exercise, they were not able to completely fulfill the plan as outlined. For example, all systems, which would realistically conduct fire over open sights during that stage of combat firing, were actually located on one line. There was simply no depth to the combat formation. For safety reasons, they did not conduct elements of defensive combat such as maneuver by fire on the flanks and in the depths, and many others.

Much of the engineer support was simulated. As is demonstrated by practice, no less than two or three full days are required to fortify a battalion defensive region. Reality is such that in the training center, the regiment has a limited amount of time and not enough to allow a subunit to both fire and exercise in the prescribed times. Although not evident in this problem, it is difficult to achieve improvement in the quality of tactical preparation. What leads us to this conclusion? First, we need more boldly to instill in practice, the means for objective control, and in particular, introduce laser-based firing and destruction simulators. In the perspective of the main criterion of field training, the subunits must receive the results of their training and application. Second, it follows that someone must designate the appropriate, pertinent documents in order to fully answer the demands of the defensive doctrine. Third, wider use of local, dominant terrain, not included in the field training area needs to be made. Naturally, this is for ordinary training and not field firing.